

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1898.—VOL. LXXIII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 2, 1899.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



HER HUSBAND THREW HER ROUGHLY AWAY. "KEEP YOUR AFFECTION FOR ORMSBY!" HE SAID, COARSELY.

A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"My marriage was an utter mistake, Maurice, though I would not confess it to any but you. You asked for the reason of my absence from England for five years—you have it. My wife is 'of the people;' I married her from a West end show-room."

"You must have been mad. For my own part I don't believe in unequal marriages."

"Neither did I, even when I made Jean Lady Greatorex; only I was wildly in love with her, and she would listen to nothing I had to say until I had spoken first to her aunt, a horrid old woman called Miss Walters. Between them they fairly made me marry my wife. The aunt would

not allow my visits until I gave my word I intended honourably by Jean."

"They acted discreetly," said Maurice Ormsby. "A flirtation with a man of your rank would have been social degradation to the girl."

"Social degradation!" my lord cried, scornfully; "are the people capable of that! Their sensibilities are less keen than ours, their natures coarser. Miss Walters and Jean were only very artful women, although you have generously termed them discreet. I've kept from England as long as I could, and now we are here, I am ashamed to meet old friends, and dread the time when I must parry inquiries concerning 'my lady's' birth and relations. I would willingly give her half my fortune to leave me and hide herself away for ever."

"Is she so very dreadful!" asked Maurice, with an air of commiseration.

"As regards her antecedents, yes; she herself is too wise to give me any ground for complaint. Having won a position, she means to keep it," dignifiedly.

"Of course all your discomfort is of your own working," the other remarked, somewhat coldly, "and it is scarcely fair to lay the onus of your folly on Lady Greatorex. Having married her it is your duty to do your best with and for her; I cannot blind myself to what is right, although I pity your distress. I have formed a sort of idea as to 'my lady's' appearance. Is it correct! Very pretty in a commonplace style, with manners that scarcely escape being vulgar; with language that grates upon a refined ear, and a love of the aspirate in curious places."

"You shall see for yourself," my lord answered, and summoned "my lady" to the smoking-room, although Maurice Ormsby protested against it as doing the lady an indignity.

"Pooh!" said Frederick Greatorex; "Jean won't mind," and they waited in silence for "my lady" to appear.

There was the soft sweep of a woman's skirts outside, and then the door was opened, and Maurice Ormsby, when he saw a perfect vision of feminine loveliness, thought the message had

miserable, and this could not be his friend's wife.

Who could feel ashamed of such a woman if her manner and speech corresponded with her beauty? She was tall, with a head proudly upborne, and her face was the loveliest Maurice had ever seen, and surrounded by a halo of golden-brown hair, the heavy coils of which seemed almost too massive for the small head; her complexion was very fair, and her eyes deep violet, shadowed by long, dark lashes, and in their wonderful depths there was a look of suppressed anguish, of patient endurance.

When Maurice saw her, his first feeling was of unbounded admiration and wonder; his next was that of pity, for the lady advancing said, in low, almost pleading tones,—

"You sent for me, Frederick," and through her voice there ran a tremor as of tears, but hardly suppressed.

With scant ceremony my lord answered,—

"This is my friend, Maurice Ormsby—Lady Greatorox."

My lady bowed, but did not extend her white hand to Maurice, neither did she say any word of welcome, and but for the shadow on her face he would have thought her a beautiful statue, a lovely, stupid woman.

"I am very glad to meet you," the young man said; "Fred and I have so long been friends that I take an interest in all doings—we once were like brothers."

Perhaps my lady did not consider this much of a recommendation, for her face grew a shade colder as she answered, courteously,—

"Being so old a friend you will find us always glad to see you."

The tone was refined and gentle, and Maurice was unwilling to believe that Fred's discomfort arose from any petulance or passion on his wife's part; he began to feel sore against his old friend, and wonder why he had so deteriorated. Fred's voice broke in upon his reverie.

"We will join you presently, Jean. By-the-way, I hope you did not keep dinner waiting for me!"

"I did until eight; then I concluded you had dined, or were dining at the club, and so had it served up."

"Rather lonely for you, but you like solitude," and with a look, she understood, her lord dismissed her.

"Well," he said, questioningly to Maurice, almost before the door closed upon her, "you have seen her?"

"Yes, and maintain that if she is as good as she is beautiful and refined you should be a happy man!"

"Probably that will be the opinion of most of my male friends; but I have learned to prize birth above beauty—like a fool I have learned it too late!"

"Does birth rank before goodness with you, too?" questioned Maurice, somewhat cynically.

"Oh, goodness is a negative virtue; folks are only good who have no temptation to be evil."

"That is an extremely nice idea!" Maurice said, knocking the ashes off his cigar. "Look here, Fred, I said I didn't believe in unequal marriages; neither do I—and for several very good reasons. One is, that the woman is usually pretty and vulgar, and eventually disgusts her husband and makes her children ashamed to call her mother. On the other hand, she is good, refined, and loving, but her husband wears out her regrets his so-called misalliance, and reminds her frequently of the low estate from which he raised her; hence comes heartburnings and bitter words, and a longing on the wife's part to pass out of the world and leave her husband free. It is best for a woman to marry in her own rank."

"There I agree with you. Confound it! why isn't there a law to prevent patricians intermarrying with plebeians?"

"The patricians may please themselves in their choice of wives; and you seem to forget that almost all the genius the world boasts has come from the middle class—and the beauty, too!"

Lord Frederick yawned; his friend had grown beyond his comprehension, and worried him.

"Let us join Jean," he said, "she shall sing to us," with an odious air of proprietorship.

"Upon my word, Fred, you talk like a slave-owner!" saying which Maurice followed his host into the drawing-room, where "my lady" was sitting before a bright fire, shading her face with a screen of Indian workmanship.

Maurice saw at a glance that her unoccupied hand lay clenched upon her knee, and that the shadow in her eyes had darkened. But she smiled faintly as she looked towards her husband, and moved her skirts to leave his passage to the fire; he took up his position on the fleecy white rug, and said, with that intolerable air of command that rested upon Maurice Ormsby's keener sensibilities,—

"Sing to us, Jean!"

The young man watched for some covert sign of rebellion but saw none, although "my lady" had the bearing of a very proud woman.

She laid aside her screen and crossed to the open piano, and struck a few low, soft chords.

The song she sang was composed by a Mayfair musician, the words were by Lewis Morris, and Ormsby listened with a thrill of pleasure, for her voice was very beautiful although not powerful, and was carefully cultivated.

"Only a woman's hair,
A fair lock severed and dead;
But where is the maiden
Where that delicate head?"

"Perhaps she is rich and fair,
Perhaps she is poor and worn;
And 'twere better that one somewhere
Had never been born."

"And the careless hand that threw
That faded tress away,
Ah! the false heart that once seemed true,
Ah! love sung away."

My lord shrugged his shoulders.

"I wish you would not dabble so much in tragic sentiment, Jean. Sing a livelier song."

My lady's face flushed slightly, but she obeyed in an almost mechanical way which was fast becoming a habit, and sang "Thady O'Flynn," and "That Rogue Riley."

Then Maurice thanked her cordially, but said he could not suffer her to fatigue herself to amuse him, and she looked relieved. It seemed to him she was little used to consideration, for his courteous words brought an expression of gratitude into the wonderful violet eyes, and the low voice trembled as she said,—

"She was not very tired," and he saw her glance deprecatingly at Frederick.

At this moment a youth of nineteen was announced; he stood blushing and confused in the doorway until "my lord" hastened forward and grasped his hand warmly.

"Why, Oliver, lad, I scarcely recognised you! When I left England you were in Eton jackets and now you sport a monstache! I didn't expect to see you for some days!"

"Oh, I was in town and only just heard of your arrival, so came up at once. I haven't forgotten your generous tips, Fred," laughing and looking very ingenuous. Then his eyes met "my lady's," and he blushed again.

Frederick at once introduced them.

"This is Oliver Greatorox, my cousin and heir-at-law; this is my wife," and his tone changed as he spoke the last four words. "Do you know Ormsby?"

"Yes."

"Oh, well, there is no need for any further formality."

Young Oliver looked at his cousin's wife with honest, boyish admiration, and after a little hesitation sat down beside her, leaving the two men to their own devices.

"I am glad to know you, cousin!" he said, frankly. "I've been curious to see you ever since I heard Fred was married, and sometimes I thought he would never return. Why did he stay away so long?"

My lady grew pale, but said, quietly,—

"He is very fond of travelling."

"Have I said anything stupid?" Oliver asked, distressfully. "You look hurt."

"You have very keen eyes," she answered, smiling. "If you are to be my frequent visitor—and I hope you are—I must keep strict watch and ward over my features. No, you did not hurt me, only you reminded me that while Frederick has many friends to welcome him back I have none; that is sad."

"Then it was for your sake he kept away!" with boyish persistency.

"Yes, for my sake," and the shadows deepened in the lovely, sad eyes. Suddenly she went a little towards the lad. "Oliver, did your guardian never tell you my origin?"

"He said—he said—forgive me, cousin—that Fred had married beneath him. I think that is all anyone knows of you. You are not angry with me for speaking the truth?"

"Oh, no!" quietly. "I am going to tell you who I was, and then if you choose you shall wash your hands of your relation by marriage. Your cousin took me from a West-end show-room and made me his wife, but had I known the misery such an alliance would work for him I would not have married him. When we go into society—as we must—some of the women will recognise me, and probably make Frederick suffer through me."

"There you're wrong," Oliver said, impetuously, "all will acknowledge you are a lady. Perhaps—perhaps your people were of good birth!"

She smiled.

"Disabuse your mind of that notion; my father was a small grocer; before her marriage my mother was a draper's assistant."

"Jean is proud of her connections," Frederick broke in, sarcastically. "Finish your story—Oliver is interested."

My lady's eyes sought his appealingly, but meeting nothing but coldness there, she said, with a certain sweet dignity,—

"My parents died when I was young, and my aunt, Miss Walters, maintained me until I was old enough to earn my own bread. I suppose I have shocked you, Oliver, and Mr. Ormsby too, but at least you will never be able to accuse me of deceit," and the faintest imaginable ring of defiance was in her tone, "although you may possibly wash your hands of me, and inform your lady friends they must not receive me."

Oliver made an indignant protest, but Maurice said gravely,—

"I think some person has laboured you with groundless distrust of our order. My dear Lady Greatorox, to see you is to acknowledge you as one of us, and every wife is lifted by her marriage to her husband's level. You will adorn your position."

Her sweet, proud mouth grew gentle as he spoke, and impulsively she gave him one slender white hand.

"Oh, thank you, thank you! Your words do me good. I have been afraid for Frederick, lest I should make him ashamed of me," and Frederick cut in savagely,—

"How many times am I to express my hatred of scenes!"

"My lady" drew her hand from Ormsby's, and sat down toying with her screen, and young Oliver's heart was hot against his cousin when he saw the tears rise to the violet eyes, and knew that only Jean's habit of strong self-control prevented their falling.

Neither he nor Maurice were inclined to stay longer, and after making their adieu they went out together into the chilly night.

"Frederick has changed for the worse," the lad said to his silent companion. "How brutal he is to his wife!"

"Poor soul! Heaven only knows what he makes her suffer. But you, Greatorox, must not interfere between them; remember no good is ever done by mediation between man and wife—or very rarely. Cruel as it may seem, neither you nor I can stir a finger on her behalf, and women only must be her comforters," his dark, strong face looked very stern in the yellow lamp-light. "If you would be her friend you must enlist the sympathy of some good woman, who will stand by her in any time of need."

They parted at the corner of the street, and Maurice went on alone to his bachelor chambers, thinking scornfully of my lord, and pitifully of

his beautiful, unhappy, unloved wife. The following evening he dined at the Honourable Wilfred Munro's, and took the daughter of the house into dinner; she turned the conversation immediately upon the latest arrivals in town.

"I believe you were the greatest friend Lord Grestorex had before he left the country!" interrogatively.

"Perhaps I was," diplomatically, not knowing to what Miss Munro's questions might lead. She was not a favourite of his, despite her beautiful face, blue eyes, and yellow hair.

"Then of course you rushed to meet him! I quite picture you posing as Jonathan to his David. Did you see his wife?"

"Yes," tersely.

"And is she beautiful?" with an arch glance into his sombre eyes.

"Very; the most beautiful woman I have ever seen—with the exception of Miss Munro," he added, as an after-thought, and bowed low to her.

"I have heard she is a very low-born woman," dropping her voice. "I think it must be so as the marriage was so very secret, and Lord Grestorex has absented himself from England so long. I suppose he is ashamed of her."

"You would be less inclined to such a supposition had you seen Lady Grestorex and heard her speak."

Valentine Munro flushed slightly at the tacit rebuke his voice conveyed.

"Is she such a paragon?"

"I did not say that; but I maintain that she is a perfect lady."

"And is the match a happy one? For my own part, I fail to believe it can be."

"That is scarcely charitable; and I consider your conclusion premature," coldly.

"She is fortunate to have won you for a champion and friend!" a trifle viciously.

"So far as I can see she does not need a champion, and I should not presume to call myself her friend, as I saw her for the first time last evening, and then for the space of half-an-hour or so."

"But first impressions are almost invariably lasting," Valentine said, indignantly, "and Lady Grestorex has evidently impressed you very favourably. With all my heart I congratulate her. She is a lucky woman who can boast having won Mr. Ormby's esteem or friendship."

"Thank you, Miss Munro. May I ask why?"

"Because you are generally supposed to be the enemy of the fair sex."

"The supposition wrongs me," coolly; "no man with the least claim to manliness is that."

The young lady looked at him curiously.

"You baffled me," she said naively. "I wonder what you are thinking now. Your face is a perfect blank."

"As is my mind; the latter is waiting to receive and retain any ideas you may be good enough to cash to me," smiling then, but she noticed that the sombre eyes did not smile with the mouth.

"Do you know," she said, bent upon flattering him, "papa calls you Bayard?"

"I'm greatly obliged to him, although I protest against figuring as a bundle of perfections. In such a case I should beg to be translated to another and better sphere."

"Indeed. We could not spare you," laughing softly; "you are the salt that savours all our gatherings. Only to be near you makes me glow with conscious respectability."

"You make me believe I must be a bit 'priggish,'" Maurice said, smiling into her blue eyes, "but I am very grateful to you for your high opinion," and shortly afterwards the ladies rose and adjourned to the drawing-room, greatly to Ormby's satisfaction. He took very little part in the conversation that followed, for his thoughts were busy with Valentine Munro and Lady Jean.

"I wonder why she is so curious as to my lady's antecedents!" so ran his musing. "She is not a woman to do another a friendly turn; and if I remember rightly, there used to be a rather warmer feeling than friendship warranted between herself and Frederick years ago. She is a clever woman and subtle, too, and if offended might

work incalculable harm. She was gracious to me this evening because she had an end in view. What can that end be?"

Anxious to solve this question he joined Valentine directly he entered the drawing-room, but she was too astute to think admiration of her charms impelled him to this course. She was beautiful, but long ago she had been told Maurice Ormby had said,—

"If there were no other woman in the world I would not marry Valentine Munro."

She had not forgiven him for that unlucky speech, although she invariably assumed her sweetest smiles and gentlest manner when he was near. She had passed through nine seasons, and now at twenty-seven looked scarcely older than she did at twenty, and each year seemed to have added something to her blonde beauty.

She had striven her best to secure an eligible partner, but, somehow, men were very rarely willing to go beyond the borders of a mild flirtation with her; her poverty was well-known and her extravagance.

It had been rumoured, too, that Miss Munro was not a pleasant element in the home circle, so she remained single. She had lately grown less ambitious, would scarcely have said no to a wealthy commoner, because her chances were getting desperately few.

Once she had hoped to become Lady Grestorex, but his lordship had suddenly grown distant in his manner, and while she wondered at the change in him there came the news of his marriage with a girl whom nobody knew.

The Munro household suffered keenly from Valentine's disappointment, and the servants were heard to declare that "Miss Munro was a perfect fiend."

All these things flashed upon Maurice as he sat talking with her, and he determined in his mind that Valentine's curiosity was the outcome of a long-sleeping resentment.

"She does not mean fairly to Lady Jean."

Then came another thought,—

"She must have some influential woman friend. Her Grace is that woman."

His friend's wife interested him, appealed to all his manly feelings, and curiously enough he felt, even in that early hour, that life was going to be very dark with her, and he wanted to spare her further trouble if he could do so without her knowledge.

So early the next day he paid a visit to his lady godmother, the Duchess of Etherington. She was sitting alone at breakfast, for she was a widow and childless, and her companion was away at the time, and she looked up at Maurice as he entered with a smile of pleasure.

"What a good boy you are!" she said, "to take pity on my loneliness; you must breakfast with me."

"I have breakfasted already, thanks; and I was casting about in my mind what excuse I could give for my very early visit."

The lady said reproachfully, "What need for an excuse! You should know I am always glad to have you with me," passing him a cup of coffee and regarding him with almost maternal affection. Folks did say her Grace had loved Ormby's father vainly; certain it was she lavished very great love upon his son, and had taught him to call her aunt from his very early days. She was a woman of noble presence, and wore her silver-streaked abundant hair under a pretty lace cap, making no pretence to fewer years than she had known. She was proud and honourable—of an old and honourable family, which boasted that no shadow of shame had ever rested on its name. There was not a man or woman in her set that did not esteem and defer to her; so that Maurice felt that if her sympathy was once enlisted in Jean's behalf things might run smoothly enough unless some unforeseen event changed the current of popular opinion.

"How grave you look, Maurice! Are you in any trouble, and am I to be your confessor?"

"I came to beg a favour of you, dear aunt; and I am not a very good mendicant. Of course you have heard that Grestorex is back!"

"Yes," wondering at his apparent irrelevancy;

"Is his wife presentable?"

"It is of her I came to speak. She is the

loveliest creature you can imagine, and her manners would reflect no discredit even on your training. I want you to be good to her."

Her Grace looked grave. "Why do you take such an unusual interest in her?"

"Because she is very unhappy—she has not said so much to me—but Grestorex treats her brutally, and twists her openly with her low birth. Upon my word, aunt, I could have struck him, and I am quite sure Oliver felt the same."

"I cannot interfere between husband and wife," quickly; "you would not wish that!"

"Certainly not. I only want you to call upon her, give her a friendly hand, let her make her debut here. All the world will follow in your lead, and her future welcome be assured."

The Duchess did not care for the mission. She was afraid Jean would disappoint her, and she had old-world prejudices concerning marriages; but she was a good and a kind woman, so she promised to do as Maurice wished, and he left, well content with his success.

Later on that morning her carriage might have been seen waiting at Lord Grestorex's door; and the Duchess had been conducted to a reception-room. Jean did not loiter on her way from her boudoir, but went with quiet grace and dignity to meet her visitor. She was wearing a plain morning dress that displayed to advantage her superb figure. Her Grace rose to meet her, looked into the sweet, proud face and wonderful violet eyes, and her own grew soft.

"My dear," she said simply, "I wanted to be your very first visitor, and Maurice has spoken so highly of you that I shall be glad to be your friend."

The lovely face flushed.

"Your Grace is very kind," and from her voice the lady guessed kindness was not her everyday food; "and in Lord Grestorex's name and my own I thank you."

Maurice probably told you of the little that unites us!" pausing for an answer to her half-question.

"No; I saw Mr. Ormby but for a short time, as our conversation was rather general than personal."

"Where did she attain this refinement of speech and manner?" wondered the Duchess; but she chatted of indifferent things until she rose to go; then she invited Jean to drive with her in the Bow the following day; and Jean, keenly alive to the duties of her position, gladly promised.

Then her Grace drove away to visit other friends and acquaintances, to all of whom she expatiated largely on the beauty and grace of Lady Grestorex.

The following week she gave a dinner, and all were invited who had not yet seen the lovely stranger.

Maurice looked forward hopefully to that evening, because he thought if Frederick saw his wife fed and admired, heard himself envied, he would forget this terrible bugbear, and be to her as in the early days of their marriage.

Valentine Munro, looking lovely, was there, anxious to meet her old rival, feeling bitter at heart against her, but making her envy and hate with pretty smiles and light words.

At length husband and wife were announced, and there was an ill-suppressed buzz of admiration as Jean entered, leaning on Frederick's arm.

He looked almost morose, but few thought of him in that first moment; she rivetted all eyes by her beauty. The Grestorex diamonds flashed round her white throat and wrists, and in her lovely hair, throwing out little scintillations of wonderful liquid light as she moved.

The Duchess moved towards her, greeted her with delicate *empressment*, and Maurice saw with pleasure that she would be a success. He was not so well pleased, however, when he found that Frederick was beside Valentine Munro, ready to take her down, whilst Lady Jean fell to his own share.

"Now, what is that woman's scheme, for I'm certain she has one. She never yet was amiable without a motive."

He wished he could hear Valentine's lowly spoken words; after all, they were apparently

simple, but they were sped with many a half-pleading or wholly sympathetic glance from the forget-me-not blue eyes.

Her companion was at first embarrassed, for in the days that had gone for ever he had not behaved quite well to her; but she speedily assumed him of her friendliness, and chatted as if he had never been a very important figure in her life.

She glanced across at Jean, talking quietly to Maurice.

"Your wife is very beautiful!" she said, with greater generosity than was usual with her.

"I believe she is," he answered, in a non-appreciative tone, and not glancing towards Jean.

"You have not yet told me who she was, although I am such a very old friend!" with a pretty smile.

"Her name was Walters," tersely, almost morosely.

Valentine laughed to herself, knowing his weak point, and said, with sweet unsuspicion,—

"One of the Surrey Walters?"

"No, I believe she was born at Huntingdon; and she boasts no ancestors."

"Oh! forgive me," Valentine murmured. "I am sorry to have wounded you; but from her manner and appearance, and her Grace's friendliness, I concluded her pedigree was as long as your own. Ah! it was cruel of you to hurry away without a good-bye—and we such old friends—and never to introduce your bride to us! You had no cause to be ashamed of her!" and he winced under her words, as she intended he should. "One day you shall tell me all about your romantic marriage. I mean to cultivate Lady Greatorx—she pleases me—as she does Mr. Ormsby."

Frederick glanced towards his wife and his friend, Jean was looking more animated than usual, and both Maurice and the man on her left appeared to be interested in her conversation. She was describing graphically some scenes from her continental life, and had for a time forgotten all discomforts. Even her husband was forced reluctantly to acknowledge she was very lovely, although that loveliness had palled upon him.

He turned again to Valentine, with a feeling almost of hatred for Jean stirring in his heart.

All through his love for her he had been very selfish; he had persecuted her with attentions which she had received indignantly; he had longed for her love, but had been unwilling to pay the price she demanded. Then his passion had mastered him, and he had sought her aunt and told her he wished to marry Jean; the maiden lady then allowed his visits, and he won the girl's heart, and finally she consented to his prayer. He insisted that the ceremony should be very quiet; even in the hour of his triumph he began to regret the step he had taken.

Now he felt again the charm of Valentine's presence; she was beautiful, so sympathetic.

He bent his dark head lower over that fair one, with its pretty curls.

"Miss Munro," he said, "I thought to find you some happy man's wife!"

One moment the forget-me-not eyes met his, and he thought there was a look of reproach in them; then they were cast down, and with a little sigh she said,—

"Perhaps I am happier in my single blessedness; and," smiling faintly, "what man would marry a beggar!"

"Wealth is not the passport to Society, but birth; you have that—and beauty!"

She used her fan dextrously to hide an imaginary blush.

"You are pleased to flatter me."

"Upon my life, no," with greater eagerness than he had yet shown; "you are lovelier than when I last saw you!" and paused, meeting Maurice's dark, inscrutable eyes fixed on him.

All through that evening, utterly regardless of appearance, he stayed by Valentine, careless of the deepening shadows in Jean's eyes, or the angry expression of young Oliver, who was already the latter's sworn slave. To the boy "my lady" seemed like some fair saint, and he was ready to

fight her battles, forgetful of Ormsby's caution. Once he found himself beside Maurice.

"Do you see what a beast Fred is making of himself?"

"I see," grimly.

"What is that woman Munro's game?"

"I don't know; I wish I did."

CHAPTER II.

My lady sat in a low chair before the fire, and Maurice Ormsby stood looking down upon her, with one elbow on the marble mantel. They had grown very real friends, for Frederick had thrown them much together, so that Jean had learned to rely on the young man's sound advice, and to feel glad of his esteem.

In her eyes the shadows had deepened, and the delicacy of her complexion was more noticeable; the faint tinge of colour had faded from her cheeks, and, despite its grace, her manner had an air of languor new to it.

She was speaking in a low, listless voice in answer to a question Maurice had asked.

"How did I meet Lord Greatorx? Did he never tell you that? I was in the employ of Messrs. Wedder & Co., what is called 'a show-room hand'; the hours were not very long, and the salary was good. I used to 'try on mantles' for the customers, and, in fact, was a sort of lay figure."

"It was not a part of my duty to attend ladies at their own homes, but one day the assistant, whose particular duty it was, was ill, and the senior partner requested that I would go to Lady Melville's to take a particular order."

"I was shown into a small room, where a gentleman sat writing. He rose, and gave me a chair, and stood talking with me until Lady Melville entered. She seemed displeased, and dismissed him rather abruptly."

"The gentleman was Frederick, and after that accidental meeting he often came down to our firm and contrived to see me. I did not live in the house, but with my aunt, who since my marriage has died; and Frederick would follow me to our lodgings and accost me, but I knew what was due to myself, and what the world would say of a friendship between a draper's assistant and a nobleman; so I maintained perfect silence towards him, until one night, flashing into anger, I told him no gentleman would so persecute a friendless girl."

"He was angry, and did not molest me again for a week or ten days, then he reappeared, and saying he knew my place of residence and intended seeing my friends on the morrow, left me. Oh! Mr. Ormsby, was I wrong then to listen to him! He had made me love him; and although at first I would not promise to be his wife, because I feared to wrong him, at last I yielded to his persuasions. And now I maintain that a woman who is honest and pure, whose education has been such as to fit her for a higher rank than that in which she is born, is any man's equal—even though he is the highest peer of the realm!"

The faint pink tinged her cheeks, and her luminous eyes kindled.

"My education was what is commonly called sound English; I had, too, a smattering of music, and when we were away I said to myself, 'He shall never have cause to blush for me,' and so employed my leisure hours (soon they were very many) in attaining those accomplishments thought necessary to complete a lady's education."

"Music, drawing, languages,—oh, Heaven!" breaking suddenly down, "nothing I did could teach him forgetfulness of my low origin! I don't blame him; I might have known how it would be, but women do not understand how men love—until it is too late! All that is left me now is to do my duty, 'to love, honour, and obey' him, and to remember I have spoiled his life, and in that remembrance learn humiliation and patience!"

Her weary head drooped upon her hands, and the slow tears trickled through the jewelled fingers. Inexpressibly touched, the young man said,—

"Surely, when he sees how others admire and crowd about you he will return to his old allegiance!"

"No!" she answered, "never any more!" and stopped hastily, because Valentine Munro was announced.

She entered smiling, but with a glance comprehended every detail of the scene—Ormsby's disturbed face, the tears that Jean hastily dashed away, and to herself she whispered, "I see the way to my revenge!" She did her best to outstay Maurice, but his patience was greater than hers, and he had a word of warning for "my lady" before he left.

"You are looking very ill!" Valentine said, with great apparent sympathy. "Are you really well, dear Lady Greatorx?"

"Quite, thank you. I never am very robust in appearance; and I have been very gay lately."

"But you take your pleasures quietly, not madly and exhaustively as I do," warning her hands and smiling up at Maurice. "One forgets to remark on Mr. Ormsby's appearance; he is always so fearfully and wonderfully grave."

"Merely to enhance the brilliancy of the butterflies," he answered, smiling peculiarly; and after a lengthened visit Valentine rose to go, disgusted with her ill-success.

Scarcely had the door closed upon her than Maurice began to speak earnestly.

"Lady Greatorx, I would particularly warn you against that woman. She is false, and she does not love you! Avoid her (not markedly) on every possible occasion. She does not mean well to you; above all, do not confide in her."

"Oh!" my lady said, wearily, "I thought her kind! My path is a very difficult one!"

"I am afraid it is. But rouse yourself, and exert your influence over Frederick against hers, which is great, greater far than you imagine, and not used in your behalf; the Duchess will tell you the same. If you need a *confidante*, go to her. I am your friend, but you will readily understand that even if I could receive your confidences, it would not be a wise or good thing. This charming world of ours does not allow friendship between man and woman."

"I understand," Jean said, quietly; "and I thank you for speaking so plainly. But I need no *confidante*. I cannot disclose my husband's shortcomings to any, not excepting the Duchess."

"You are right to endure in silence so long as you can," gravely; "but if your burden grows too great, go to my aunt; she has already a warm affection for you," with which words he took his leave.

Outside his face grew stern and troubled; he wanted to help this woman, he pitied her so much, but he did not see clearly how to do it; and a strange, vague feeling stirred at his heart that gave him a sense of unrest and discomfort.

Perplexed, dissatisfied with himself, he decided to call upon his godmother; and, acting on this resolve, was chagrined to find her out.

He went into the library, bidding a servant tell him when she returned. And after a long perusal of titles of the many books in the well-filled shelves, he took down Arnold's "Essays on Criticism," but his thoughts would wander away, and at last he threw the volume impatiently down, and sat thinking of all that had happened in the last three weeks—Frederick's return, his introduction to Jean, and consequent friendship—and his restlessness increased.

He thought of her beauty, her lonely distress, her loveless, empty life, and his heart ached for her. He longed to protect her, but he had no right to do that; the only thing he could do was to quietly watch over her interests, and to gain his godmother's full and perfect affection for her.

He was so buried in his thoughts that it was with a great start he found the Duchess standing beside him.

"Why, Maurice, what a very brown study you were in! I spoke twice before you heard me."

"I beg your pardon, my dear aunt," rising and giving her a chair. "Have you been home long?"

"Yes. Drake told me you were here, and as the mountain did not come to Mahomet, Mahomet came to the mountain. You must have

wished this interview greatly to wait for me," with a keen glance at the perplexed, dark face. "What is it, Maurice?"

"I want to talk to you about Lady Greatorox. I've been there to-day; she was alone."

The lady looked grave.

"My dear boy, I am afraid you are too constant a visitor there."

"I begin to think so too, but what am I to do? Frederick is constantly begging me 'to drop in,' and when I do so he is almost invariably away; then he asks me to escort my lady to this and that place, because he has a previous engagement. I cannot well refuse, but I don't like it. I am afraid of scandal, not for myself, you know, but for her."

"Yes; that must be considered, Maurice. There is another reason why you should not see Lady Greatorox so often. She is a very beautiful woman, and you are a young man."

"What do you mean, aunt?" his face flushing, and his voice a little shaken.

"Tut, my boy, that I do not consider friendship between you safe. You may get hurt!"

"What made you say that?" the trouble deepening in his eyes; then, with a sudden burst of candour, "The fact is, aunt, I have thought of such a possibility, myself—to-day for the first time—and I concluded it would be well for me to draw back now before the mischief is done—gradually, so that Lady Greatorox does not immediately discover any change in me. You see, with growing confusion, 'I have never flirted, never cared for any woman, and if I did learn to love I should have the plague badly.'

"She is a good woman and true, and, as you imply, the danger is all yours in a certain sense; but, supposing you learned to care for her in that way, and she another man's wife, you might not be able always to hide your passion. So you would compromise her name, and increase her misery."

"You are right, aunt," steadily. "What a blessing it is I have you to advise me and to appeal to. I want you to supply my place—I want you to be as dear a friend to her as I find it in myself to be. For my sake, if not for hers, you will grant me this?"

"Yes, and far—far more if you choose to ask it," warmly. "I really like Lady Greatorox for her own sake. She is not a brilliant, but she is a pure and noble woman. There are very few like her."

"I know that, and I have found a great pleasure in talking with her. She is so earnest—so kindly in her estimate of all—the exact opposite of the woman of the period."

He paused and the lady said,—

"When will you begin the new line of conduct?"

"To-day is Tuesday. To-morrow I have promised to take her to the Minnertons. Frederick is due elsewhere. Well, then, I begin on Thursday. By the way, aunt, what is your opinion of Miss Munro?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because she is continually protesting great friendship for Lady Greatorox, and she does nothing without a motive."

"That is very true, although it sounds harsh. Was there not some talk of an engagement between her and Lord Greatorox before he met his wife?"

"Yes; I have advised the latter to place no confidence in her."

The Duchess was silent for a time, then she said, quietly,—

"I am due at the Minnertons too. Suppose you call for me, and together we can drive round for our mutual friend?"

"Oh, thank you! I knew I might count on your ready help, but this really exceeds my hopes."

So on Thursday Jean arrived at the Minnertons with her two friends, and the Duchess did not leave her the whole of the evening.

Mrs. Munro turned to look at the tall, beautiful figure of Fred's wife, and wondered why the sweet, proud face so rarely brightened into smiles—why the violet eyes wore so great a look of pain!

And whilst men admired and women envied her, her husband was pleasantly engaged in conversation with Miss Munro.

Mrs. Munro was asleep in her chair, and "the Honourable"—by the way his title was a libel on him—was at his club, so the two, sitting in one of the deep windows talking in low tones, feared no interruption.

"How could you think I had forgotten you, Val?" Greatorox was saying, and the fair-faced woman answered with a quick look towards her mother,—

"You must not call me that."

"Why not?" he asked, impetuously. "You know I have outlived my miserable infatuation; you know I love you. Valentine! I belong to me; remember how wretched I am."

"Am I not wretched?" her face hidden in her pretty jewelled hands. "Have I ever for a moment forgotten the past? Is it not enough for you to know for your sake I am still Valentine Munro? I tell you plainly, Fred, I will not compromise myself by any flirtation with you."

"Would to Heaven I could free myself!" passionately. "Oh! my darling, think of a way in which I can rid myself of her! I swear on my honour if you will devise some plan, so soon as I am free I will marry you."

She looked up, a triumphant glitter in her forget-me-not eyes, a flush on her face.

"Can you think of nothing?" she asked, quickly. "Are you blind to your own interests?"

"I confess I can see no way out of my misery," bitterly. "She is so discreet a woman, and she loves me!"

"She is discreet, but may be made to appear otherwise, and that very easily."

"How—how?" his breath coming fast, and in his excitement he raised his voice so that it disturbed Mrs. Munro, and she turned uneasily in her chair.

"Come into the next room," Valentine whispered, and he followed her softly, and, entering, closed the door. Then this woman he so blindly preferred to his own real wife said, in very low tones,—

"My lady is seen everywhere with Mr. Ormsby!"

"By my wish!" not catching at her idea, and for a moment she was afraid to disclose her plot, but he urged passionately that she would not keep him in suspense, and she went on, with deliberation,—

"How is the world to know that? You and I can swear to the contrary, though it would be as well for me not to appear in this. You may feign jealousy—may declare my lady's frivolity has estranged you from her—"

"Of what use would that be?"

"How stupid you are!" impatiently. "There is such a thing as the Divorce Court!"

For a moment even he was staggered by the revelation of so devilish a plot. Just while one might count five he felt a throb of revulsion; then it passed, and he caught the woman to him.

"Go on, Val," hoarsely. "Let me hear the whole, love! Love, you will yet be my wife!"

Yes, if she could compass it she would.

"You must throw your friend and my lady together more and more. Let them be seen together at all places, and from to-night avoid me—for a time. We must meet secretly to discuss our plans. My rôle is this. I am her friend until such time as our plans are ripe for execution. Then I drop her, and am asked why. By sundry shrugs and liftings of the brows I imply she is not what she should be. Then will come a climax—but of that later on. Only in all things rely on me, and act by my advice!"

"I will—I will!" eagerly. "Kiss me, Val. You have never given me one caress since that night more than five years ago."

She lifted her lips to his and kissed him once, then urged him to go lest her father should return, and after he had reluctantly obeyed her, she sat down by the table and laying her face upon her arms, broke into a fit of low laughter.

"The fool!—the fool!" she said, at last, through her small clenched teeth, "to think I love him or forgive his desertion! Not to see

it is his wealth, his position I covet! He will find me a trifle less angelic and submissive than my lady. As for her"—and her beautiful face grew dark and cruel—"as for her, she shall be sorry for the day in which she stole him from me. I shall pay off all old scores at one blow, and if he knew who planned and worked his disgrace and hers, Maurice Ormsby would wish he had never insulted me!"

It caused Jean some surprise when her friend's visits grew fewer, whilst Greatorox felt unforgotten, and began to think that his plot would fail; but Valentine, in their secret meetings, encouraged him and instructed him how to proceed.

Acting on her advice he frequented Maurice's Club, and basking in her light would insist on carrying him off to his home. Sometimes they found Miss Munro there, but the host was always distant to her, and she apparently almost ignored his existence, so that Jean thought Ormsby's suspicions unfounded, and was kindly and gracious to the beautiful blonde who was constantly assuring her of her great affection.

Maurice did not find it an easy matter always to refuse Fred's pressing invites, and when Jean added her pleadings to his, he not infrequently succumbed; besides, he was sure that no good result would spring from an intimacy with Valentine, so he went again and again, and Fred saying, "You are such a steady old fellow, I can leave my wife to your care with a clear conscience," would go to his club or to keep some engagement with Valentine, whilst Maurice accompanied Jean to theatre or opera, until it began to be a usual thing for Society to couple their names—not at first in an evil or censorious spirit, because Maurice was Fred's friend, and my lady had already won golden opinions to herself, besides which Her Grace the Duchess of Rotherington made much of her.

So early April came, and then Valentine thought it was high time to begin operations. Greatorox was growing impatient. Her father's creditors were more threatening, and a crash was imminent.

My lady once disposed of, her own good was secured.

She had taken every precaution to prevent failure.

She had recommended a maid to Jean, who was a creature of her own, and willing for a price to traduce her generous and gentle misdeeds.

Frederick, acting on her advice, had engaged an extra footman, whose duty it was to spy upon "my lady," and between man and maid there was a perfect understanding. Rich was ready at a given time to swear away my lady's honour, to wreck her life for the greed of gold.

Jean felt an instinctive distrust of the smooth-tongued Jenny, and nothing but her sense of justice compelled her to retain the girl.

She was quick, and apparently willing; light of foot, quiet in manner; never neglected any of her duties; gave no cause even for the mildest complaint, so that when Valentine asked if Jenny suited her taste, my lady answered that she was a clever and a willing maid, but that she disliked and distrusted her.

"Poor Jenny!" murmured Valentine, pityingly, "I am sorry you should think so ill of her, she is a worthy little soul; if I were happy enough to have a maid I should choose Jenny Baldwin in preference to any. Probably you don't know her story! No! Ah! that is like the girl, to keep her troubles to herself. By her own exertions she maintains her mother and a crippled sister, and finds something to spare for a brother who is left a widower with five little children."

All of which were concocted by Valentine and implicitly believed by my lady, who strove, by kindness and many a generous gift, to lighten Jenny's lot and atone for that strange sense of distrust she could not conquer.

Life was growing harder to the unhappy wife. Greatorox was now often brutal in speech and manner towards her, and began to speak jealously of Maurice, even before the servants; and once, my lady remonstrating, he half raised his hand as if to strike her. She was standing before him,

but she did not wince at his gesture, nor under his dark look. She uttered no reproach, only her face was very white, and he saw a sudden flash in her beautiful eyes, as if the gentle spirit was at last roused to anger. Then she turned and swept from the room to find refuge in her boudoir; there she flung herself upon a couch, and sobbed tearfully, but as though her heart would break.

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven!" she moaned, "if I had but one thing to call my own, a little child to love me, and on whom I could cast my love—to save me from madness—to help me bear my bitter burden!"

Then her tears began to flow, and she lay with hidden face praying Heaven would graciously take her to himself. A slight rustling sound made her glance quickly up, and she saw Jenny regarding her fixedly in an opposite mirror; the girl stepped hastily to her side.

"My lady is ill," she said, softly, but Jean shook her head and motioned away the sal volatile she had poured out. Then the girl spoke deprecatingly, and as if afraid of offending. "My lord has been cruel to my lady. Oh! my dear mistress, if I could bear this grief for you!"

Jean rose.

"You have forgotten yourself Jenny," she said, coldly, "do not presume so far again," and she dismissed her.

Outside, the maid's face changed.

"You poor fool!" she blessed, "you have forgotten yourself! I shall remember those words to your cost, my lady!"

Jean spent the long hours alone, resolving what to do; and when the next day came and brought with it Maurice Ormsby she met him with a quietly determined face. She had been giving him such some instructions concerning a dress, and as she passed out of the room Jean thought she flashed a peculiar look at the man who admitted Maurice, and who was her confederate, but she did not mention her suspicion then. She motioned her visitor to a chair, and with a gentle frankness, peculiar to her, at once broached the subject upon which she had brooded all night.

"I am glad you have come to-day, because I have something of importance to say to you. For several days I have been trying to summon the necessary courage to do this, and until now have failed."

"Is it anything very fearful? because if so I would rather not hear it," Maurice said, smilingly.

"You will think it so," wearily. "I ought to have told you before, only—only you have been so kind a friend I could not. Mr. Ormsby, you must not come here any more!"

"Why?" sharply, and the man's heart failed him. "What objection have you to my visits?"

"Personally, none; you know that I am always glad to see you—but oh! how shall I tell you! Lord Greatorax has insulted me through you; has—has grown jealous of our friendship. Last night he spoke words I cannot forget, and it is best we should meet no more save as casual acquaintances." She paused, as if she hoped he would speak, but he only stood looking down at her with white, angry, tortured face, and eyes that could not see her beauty.

She spoke again, and her voice was full of tears.

"Oh! I have hurt you cruelly; but what could I do! It is my duty to please him still—if I can—if I can!"

"Yes," he said, mechanically, "it is your duty."

"You—you are not very angry with me!"

"No," his face was distorted, and his voice hoarse, and until now he had spoken with a great effort, but suddenly his words came so fiercely and fast that they were huddled and almost unintelligible.

"For what does Frederick Greatorax take me! Am I a villain that I should wrong another man so sorely, and that man once my friend! Did he not thrust me upon you whether I would or no, and without consulting your wishes! Have I not been his deputy, his lacquey? Have I not stood in the gap so that the world might not know his miserable madness! Have I ever spoken one word to you he and all might not hear. Be-

cause I saw you desolate, wretched, I have stood by you, trying to make your life a little better, a little happier!"

"I know, I know!" she sobbed. "Oh! do not take this so sorely to heart; remember that he spoke madly, that he could not mean what he said. And, oh! do not forget my gratitude—my undying gratitude. Perhaps when he knows how wrong, how unfounded his suspicions are, he will be sorry and beg your forgiveness."

He laughed harshly; then suddenly said, in an altered tone,—

"He will not do that. He wishes to drive away your only friend—no, not your only friend; I had forgotten my godmother; but he wants to leave you lonely that so, being miserable, you may agree to anything he demands of you. And Valentine Munro is the woman who moves him to this."

"Oh, no, no! Indeed, you wrong her. She is most kind; most good to me!"

"Ah! who would connect malice and evil with that pretty, fair face, those innocent eyes!" bitterly. "Lady Greatorax, I will obey you implicitly in all things; I will not come here again unless he asks me, which is improbable; but I shall not forget you or cease to be your friend. I am going at once, because I feel this interview must be extremely painful to you. Shall you tell him what you have done?"

"Certainly, I have no secrets from my husband!" tremulously.

Then the man put out his hand.

"Good-bye!" he said. "If ever you are in sore need send for me."

Her tears fell fast as she said good-bye, and her lovely, weary eyes followed his slowly retreating figure.

With his hand upon the door he turned to look at her.

"Heaven help you!" he said, and went out. He thought he heard the faint echo of steps, but he saw no one, and fancied himself mistaken. Yet Jenny had only stolen from the door to a little alcove, where she hid until he left the house. Then she sallied out with a smiling face,—

"With a little cunning we shall win our wages!" she thought; and, hearing Jean's bell, hastened to answer it.

"My lady rang?" she said, demurely, and glanced at her mistress through lowered lashes.

"Yes; I wish to know what there is between you and Greaves!"

"My lady! In mild expostulation, "I do not understand."

"Indeed, you do," Jean said, calmly; "there is some secret telegraphy between you, and it concerns me!"

"Oh, my lady! how have we deserved this distrust," Jenny asked, her handkerchief to her eyes. "Oh! forgive me, forgive me! But he and I—are—are engaged to be married. There is nothing else between us. And we say nothing of it because we shall have to wait so long."

"I wish I could believe you," my lady said, coldly. "In my heart I know you for a spy; but I cannot prove it. One day perhaps I shall; then you know what in self-defence I shall do. You can go."

And the girl went out sobbing and protesting, whilst Jean lay back pale and worn with the morning's event and the past night's agony.

Ah! she was too open an enemy. She could not meet subtlety with subtlety, cunning with cunning. Her weapons were purity and honesty, which, pitted against hate, malice and craft, are too often weak opponents.

Meanwhile Maurice, with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his face very dark, his brow lowering, made his way to his godmother's. When she saw him she knew something had gone very wrong, and like a wise woman she waited for him to speak.

He sat down, moodily, then he said,—

"I'm thinking of going away, aunt!"

"Why?" she questioned, quietly; "the season is not nearly over!"

He answered bitterly that the season had no charms for him. The sooner he left town the happier he should be. Then, in a hoarse voice and with hurried words, he told the story that

John had told him. And as she listened the gentle lady's face flushed, and her usually quiet eyes flashed indignantly.

"So," she said, when he had finished, "to use an old adage, the devil has shown his claws! Ah, that poor girl! But I have feared this for some time. Why has he thrown you so much together if not for some vile motive! But what that motive is is he! I to guess."

"Valentine Munro is at the bottom of this," Maurice said, vehemently, interrupting her.

"There I think you are unjust. She is not even on friendly terms with Greatorax!"

"Apparently," he said sharply. "Wait and see, and subsequent events will prove that I am right, you wrong. For myself, I don't care; but for her, that poor girl! almost friendless and utterly at his mercy, without an idea how to defend herself against the man she is wretched enough to call husband. By Heaven! it is too cruel—it makes a fellow a coward only to think of it!"

His godmother touched his arm, "Maurice," she said, pitifully, "I think you are right; you must go away."

His dark head drooped, and his face flushed. "Have I betrayed myself, aunt?" he asked.

"To me! Yes!"

He rose.

"It is true; but I never realised it until this morning, and, thank Heaven, she does not know. I have never, by word or glance, told her what she is to me. I have been her friend, but no more, and now I must leave her unprotected, alone!"

"No, Maurice; I will not forsake her. She must be a good woman who could win your love!"

He smiled sadly, then said,—

"You do me too much honour, aunt. After all, I think I shall remain in town for a few weeks longer. I am confident some crisis is impending, and she may need a man's help. But you need not fear; I shall not try to see her, because, having learned my wickedness, I know how far I may go in safety—and when by chance we meet I shall play my part discreetly. I shall not even seek a quarrel with Greatorax, though it would give me the greatest satisfaction to punish him as he deserves. To think that thing was ever my friend!" bitterly; then his thoughts turned again to Jean. "When will you go to her!"

"Now; wait here until I return."

And far into the day he sat, thinking of all that had passed in the previous two weeks, wondering how he had been so long learning his own secret; pondering what Jean would feel and say could she know it, and in bitterness of spirit recalling and confirming what a modern poet has well written:—

"O love that never pardoneth,
O love, more pitiless than death,
His strife is vain who would express
Thy sweets, without thy bitterness."

CHAPTER III.

Valentine's visits to my lady began to be like angels' visits, very rare things. She took care to impress this upon all her friends and acquaintances, affected utter ignorance of Jean's movements, and when speaking of her sighed, shrugged her shoulders and smiled with odious significance, so that soon her lady friends agreed there was something mysterious, and not quite right about "my lady." Then Miss Munro's visits altogether ceased, and Jean felt sadly all her friends were leaving her, and wondered in what manner she had offended Valentine. She withdrew a little from society, and tried to occupy herself pleasantly at home! When she appeared in public it was usually with the Duchesse or young Oliver, who swore by his cousin's wife.

One night all the fashionable world was present at a dinner given by a wealthy, handsome widow. Jean had been invited, but declined; Valentine, however, was there, pretty, grave, and smiling, with a gleam of triumph in her eyes, for to-night

she was going to strike Jean a great blow, and she felt convinced it would tell; that blow would only be the forerunner of others and worse ones. In the drawing-room, before the advent of the gentlemen, she seated herself beside an old woman, who, despite her ugliness and malicious tongue, had once been a leader of fashion.

There was no one too innocent for Lady Thurlay to attack, no one so pure that might not fear her virulence, and Valentine knew by speaking alightingly of Jean to the old harridan, she would make society ring with the fact that "my lady" was far from blameless in her life. Very cleverly she led Lady Thurlay to speak of her; and then, with lowered lids and mournful intonation, said she did not visit her any longer, and, pausing, sighed.

The old woman eagerly caught at her words, her tone, and begged to know why the friendship between "her dear Miss Munro and Lady Greatorex no longer existed," and, under promise of secrecy, Valentine said that she could not countenance my lady's monstrous flirtation with Mr. Ormsby; that she believed the coldness between husband and wife to result from the latter's partiality for the husband's friend.

"But," she added, "you will keep this secret inviolate; I would not betray Lady Greatorex, or in any way hurt her."

Of course, her companion renewed her protestations of silence, and Valentine smiled to think how soon they would be forgotten or lightly regarded.

When the gentlemen joined the ladies she saw with satisfaction that Lady Thurlay moved from one to another dowager, talking in an animated way, and by the uplifting of eyes and hands she knew the story was being circulated with many additions to add to its flavour.

By the close of that evening very many knew that Lord and Lady Greatorex were on bad terms; that the rupture had been caused by my lady's audacious flirtation with Maurice Ormsby, who had been forbidden the house by the injured husband.

Ah! for Jean's fair name! Ah! for her peace!

The following day the Duchess of Hetherington heard the story, and waxed angry over it, denied it emphatically, but thought sadly,—

"This is the first threatening of the storm. Heaven help that poor girl!"

She would have gone to Jean, but a somewhat severe indisposition confined her to her room, and she had to be content with sending kindly messages; but she could not find it in her heart to tell her how her fair fame was being done to death by cruel tongues, so Jean lived a few days longer in ignorance of all.

She was looking very pale and ill; she missed Ormsby's kindness and Valentine's sprightly talk, and was unfeignedly glad when one morning Oliver burst into the room.

"Where is Fred?" he asked, after the usual greetings had passed.

"Out of town; he has gone to the country with Colonel Milbourn."

"Then, of course, your time is your own!" joyfully; "and I want you to go with me to the Horticultural Fête. It will be quite a swell affair, and you are to look your best, Cousin Jean. Oh! don't say no. I will not accept a refusal!" and he won his way by his impetuosity.

When they were well out, he turned to look at his companion.

"By Jove! cousin, how beautiful you are to-day, and how prettily you are dressed! All the fellows will be envying me!" with boyish pride.

She smiled sadly. Oliver thought, with a pang, he had never heard her laugh, and his heart throbbed with passionate indignation of his cousin's callousness. But they were at the gates, and here they came upon Maurice alone.

He seemed pleased to see them, and entered with them. Jean remarked gravely that he was looking worn and ill; he answered, carelessly, that town did not suit him, and he was leaving it in the course of a week.

At that moment they met a lady acquaintance, and Jean bowed, the men lifted their hats, but

the lady looked away, and Maurice felt a sudden inexplicable dread come upon him.

He glanced at Jean; she said, quietly and innocently,—

"Poor Mrs. Stogrove! How terribly short her sight is!" but he knew the cut was intentional.

They entered the tent, and some of their acquaintances fell back and hastily left as they entered; others ignored them, and when he looked at Jean again her face was very white. By a sign he commanded silence of Oliver, and they passed into the grounds once more.

Here they met Valentine and a man who affected her society; Jean bowed, and tried to smile; Miss Munro looked her through, as it were, and turned away with no sign of recognition. My lady, trembling and faint, caught at Oliver's arm, but it was to Maurice she spoke,—

"What does it mean?" she asked, and at the anguish in her voice her companions were afraid. "Oh, tell me!" she implored, "why will none of them see me, or exchange a word with me! What have I done?"

"There is some vile conspiracy against you," Maurice said, and longed to catch her to him. This was the most terrible hour of his life, for in her unmerited pain and disgrace he could give her no comfort, and dared not, must not, offer her his love. She stood a moment, white and stricken, then she wailed, rather than said,—

"Take me home. I—I think I have got my death-blow!"

She swayed a little towards Oliver, and he did his best to support her. Then he whispered,—

"Don't break down, dear cousin, it will all come right; Fred will teach them a lesson—and we will stand by you to the end."

She did not seem to hear him; she only reiterated,—

"Take me home! take me home!"

They drew her through the gaily-dressed crowds. She saw no one; but they heard and saw all that passed. Maurice walked with head erect and dark, stern face. In that hour he longed most for revenge. But Oliver looked from right to left, his young cheeks crimson, his lips quivering. On their way they passed Valentine again, and the lad left his companions a moment, to say in a loud tone,—

"I fancy, Miss Munro, you can explain all this. If it is you who have wronged Lady Greatorex, you may wish you had never been born!"

It did Jean no good, because those who heard said,—

"Has she bewitched that boy too!"

Outside the gates Maurice called a cab, and putting my lady in, bade Oliver follow her. Then he strode away in an opposite direction. His first thought was to find Greatorex. There was murder in his heart then, and he would have rejoiced to see his one time friend stretched dead at his feet.

He walked on and on, heedless of where he went, thinking, and thinking valiantly, what help could reach Jean; and then there came a sense of thankfulness that he had so well hidden his love and his pain from her, because she could still trust him, confide in him, and, if need were, apply to him for aid.

Oliver assisted my lady from the cab, and merely telling Greatorex she had been taken suddenly ill, led her to the breakfast-room, and made her lie down upon a couch.

"Don't let anyone come to me," she said, then hid her face in the cushions, and lay like one dead.

The lad's heart was too full for much speech, so he only said, in a choked voice,—

"Don't break down, dear cousin; if no one else will see you righted I will."

She signed that she heard him, and he knelt down beside her, and kissed her hand; then he attempted to speak again,—

"You've been so good to me—a—sort of mother to me! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! I'm a fool—but—but—" and could say no more, and when Jean turned her poor white face upon him she saw his blue grey eyes were full of tears, and that he wore an Englishman's

expression of shame at being detected. Her weary voice broke the sudden stillness,—

"Don't vex yourself about me, Oliver. My trouble must not be yours."

"Oh," he cried, with flushed face and clenched hands, "If I could crush them all in one grip!" His bones were hoarse and tremulous with rage. Suddenly he sprang up. "I'm going to look for Ormsby; perhaps I shall find him at his godmother's; if I do I will bring him back, and we will talk this over, and—"

"No, no; you must not bring him here, Frederick would be angry. And Oliver, don't think me ungrateful, but—but I must be alone," clasping her aching temples between her white hands.

The lad rose. "I will obey you in both things; but I am going to fight your battles still," and then she was alone.

"Thank Heaven I alone!" she whispered in her wrong heart. She locked the door, and went slowly to the couch again, and, kneeling, hid her face upon it; hour after hour as it passed went laden with her anguish, for her "time was not;" life seemed have grown to an eternity, and that eternity was pain. She heard no sound from the outer world; no thought of comfort came to her as she knelt; in her heart was a dumb cry for consolation and love, and both were denied her.

Oh! for the touch of baby fingers upon her cheek, the clasp of baby fingers about her throat; the feeble, imperfect words of love in baby tones. Other women, wretched in their husbands, found comfort in their children. She had no child! Lower and lower sank her beautiful head with its heavy coils of hair; there was no sound in the room save that of deep-drawn breaths that came shudderingly from her pale lips.

A scarlet and grey parrot looked on in solemn silence, apparently deliberating why its mistress lay there so motionless, so speechless. The golden noon had long since passed, and the long, level beams of light across the floor showed the afternoon was far advanced, and still my lady did not stir; then the parrot grew impatient, and hopping to and fro strove to attract her attention, and falling, began to whistle "When other lips."

My lady started up. "Silence," she cried in an awful voice; "silence! Oh, Heaven! oh, Heaven! I am going mad!" and throwing her arms high above her head, fell heavily forwards, and for a short time knew neither care nor woe, because her senses were lost in blessed forgetfulness.

When she recovered consciousness she heard a knocking at the door. Slowly she rose, and opened it to confront Jenny.

"Oh! my lady!" she cried, "how frightened we have been! We—we thought you ill & dead—and none of us could come in to you."

"I have been ill, I am not now. I shall not dress this evening, so you will not disturb me. I am going to my room." She moved forward uncertainly, with feet that scarce could so her will.

"My lady has eaten nothing all day!" Jenny said, with respectful anxiety.

"I want nothing;" and in some way crept up the broad staircase and through the long corridor to her own apartments.

Late in the evening she heard her husband's step outside, and opening her door spoke to him, "Frederick."

He passed and turned a pitiless, cruel face upon her. "What is it?"

She went towards him, and suddenly put her arms about his neck, laying her hand upon his shoulder.

"Oh, my husband! my husband! be kind to me—my heart is broken! Fred—Fred—Fred!"

But he thrust her roughly away. "Keep your affection for Ormsby," he said coldly.

She fell back against the wall, her lovely eyes full of a great horror, her face drawn and ghastly. She tried to speak, and could not.

And he went on ruthlessly. "Does your conscience accuse you at last? I have heard of the disgrace you have this day brought upon me, and I will never forgive you or call you wife again; neither will I exchange any word with you. I

shall not trouble you with my presence. I have taken chambers, and am now going to them."

She spoke at last. "What have I done that you should hate me? A Heaven is my witness I have been a true wife."

He turned on his heel with an oath. She did not follow him; she did not raise any outcry; she crept like a dying creature back to her room moaning in her heart, "Heaven is very cruel."

Early in the following day the Duchess of Eberington called and demanded to see her. She requested the light-footed Jenny to take her to my lady's room; and, entering, was shocked at the change she saw in her. Her face looked pinched and worn, dark circles were about the sunken eyes, and her beauty seemed almost to have left her.

"My child!" the Duchess said. "I have come to comfort you," and clasped Jean to her heart; and the touch of her kind hands, the close kiss, broke down my lady's self-control. She clung about her friend, and they wept together.

When they had grown calmer, the older woman said, "You must drive with me to-day in the Row."

Jean started, "Oh, no! no! I cannot endure another trial like that of yesterday." But she other insisted.

"My dear, if you hide yourself away, society will say you are afraid; if you appear with me daily the storm will soon blow over; those who cut you will be most eager for a renewal of friendship. My name and my character," proudly, "are known; and to be my friend is to win social safety."

So my lady allowed herself to be persuaded, and drove in the row with the gayest of the gay. Society was surprised and not a little scandalized by "Her Grace's" conduct, but dared not openly comment upon it. On all sides men and women bowed to her and smiled; but no one gave Jean any sign of recognition save a pretty, dark-eyed girl, who was smartly reprimanded by her mother for her imprudence.

Jean thought the drive would never end; but she preserved a quiet demeanour, and even answered her friend rationally. At last the order was given "home," and in a little while she was deposited safely at her door. She asked if Crestorex had returned in her absence, and was answered in the negative, and her heart sank yet lower.

In the evening she dined alone. Oliver "dropped in," as he called it, to see her, and tell her he was going to the club, and, if possible, he would bring "Fred home like a naughty school-boy."

Then she was alone again, and began to wonder how she had alighted so easily, and why no one would tell her the reason of the "but direct" she had received.

(Continued on page 497.)

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES.

—:—

CHAPTER XLII.

"Oh, Mr. Mallon, I am so sorry!" and Nella, with crimson cheeks, scrambled to her feet and stood up before him, as if she had suddenly come through the floor.

"You here!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "I could have sworn there was no one in the room!"

"I—I was lying here, warming myself, I suppose; and you came in so suddenly that I had not time to get away. I did stop my ears, but I couldn't help hearing a little."

"And that little you won't tell!"

"Certainly, I won't. I never told anyone, except Cyril, that I had found your whisker; but I am dying of curiosity," looking up at him with a smile, though her lashes were still wet with tears.

"You shall know all some day; and I don't think you will be sorry for helping me, even though you seem such friends with Mr. Somer-

ville," he added, remembering his promise to Vera, and fancying he saw an opening.

"Friends!" she repeated, in surprise. "Have you forgotten that I told you I hated him!"

"No," with a slight smile, as he leant against the window-frame, in an attitude that might have been graceful if his figure had not been spoilt by that slight hump between his shoulders; "but, like most people, when the luck is against them, I am apt to judge by actions rather than words."

"What do you mean!" throwing her head back proudly.

"Simply this—I will be very frank with you. If you disliked Somerville as much as you fancied you did, you would not have gone to meet him at Nun's Tower!"

"I never did!" her eyes flashing resentfully.

"Never!" looking at her fixedly. "We found a bit of red ribbon off your dress in a summer-house," he added, slowly.

"He must have put it there. Won't you believe me?"

"I will believe anything you tell me," he said, gravely. "I could fancy he might put it there to anger Vera, if he guessed we were likely to come; but, as to yesterday, can you tell me that you only met him just outside the gates?"

She hung her head, whilst a wave of colour mounted to her forehead.

"I had an idea that you were at Nun's Tower with him, having gone there simply for the purpose of getting news of him; that he tried to keep you there against your will; that there was a slight struggle—probably just as you were starting homewards—during which your neck was scratched accidentally by something he was holding in his hand, and your reins were broken; that somehow you managed to get free, and he caught you up on the road. Tell me if I am right or wrong!"

She twisted her fingers in and out of each other, hesitating palpably as to how much she should admit. "Don't ask me," she said, at last, "till after Tuesday."

"Why Tuesday?" his suspicious roused in a moment.

"I mean—till—till—you are just going away."

"I have no right to ask you anything," completely puzzled by her conduct; "only, as Vera's greatest friend, perhaps you will forgive me if I take a liberty."

He waited for an answer, so she bent her head in assent.

"Last night you allowed Somerville to plead the excuse of a headache, in order that he might escape dinner and have a prolonged *côte à côte*."

"Excuse me," she interrupted, hastily, "I allowed nothing. I was lying there, at the mercy of anyone who chose to come and worry me."

"But instead of sending him away, you talked to him contentedly."

"How do you know anything about it?" turning upon him, passionately.

"Vera opened the door, with a glass of wine in his hand, which he thought might do you good; but he came away directly, not wishing to interfere."

She grew so pale that, in spite of everything, he pined her.

"He saw me!" she said, in a low voice.

"Yes, he saw you; and when he came to bed, he wrote to accept Captain Mackinnon's offer of an exchange."

She leant against the back of a chair as if half-stunned. This was why she had read such scorn in his eyes the only time that their eyes met at breakfast—this was why he had resolved to go to India!

"Miss Maynard, I have no right to interfere, as I said before," and Mr. Mallon, bent on fulfilling his mission, came forward to the table.

"I cannot understand the secret understanding between you, or by what pledge he had bound you; but this I must say, that Godfrey Somerville is a man to whom no woman would do well to trust either her happiness or her honour."

A little shiver ran through her from head to foot as she thought of those few terrible minutes when she was in his power.

Mr. Mallon saw the shudder, and feared that his warning had come too late.

"What has he done to you?" she said, coldly.

"I am his enemy. I tell you that frankly."

"Tell it to him the next time you meet. It would be more honourable than pretending to be a stranger, and blackening his character behind his back."

A gleam of passion flashed from his eyes; he began to speak, but checked himself. A minute elapsed, and then he said, quietly,—

"In a few days I hope to tell him so to his face. It is only necessity which keeps me silent now; but you know nothing, so, of course, you misjudge me."

"As you misjudge me, I am trying hard to do what is right by all!" looking up pitiously into his face; "but you and Cyril make it as difficult for me as you can."

"Poor child!" his tender heart moved to compunction at once. "I only meant to help you."

"To help me, by suspecting me of all sorts of wickedness! It was bad enough for Captain Vera to think it, but worse still for him to mention it to anyone else."

"He was half mad, and obliged to open his heart to someone."

"And what am I to do! Am I not alone! It's worse for a woman than a man."

"He wanted you to treat him as I believe you used to do; but you chose Somerville instead."

"Or rather, seeing me utterly neglected, he thrust himself upon me. Perhaps it will relieve your mind to know that I never in all my life hated a man so much as I did Godfrey Somerville only yesterday afternoon, when you were kind enough to think I was flirting with him. As you are anxious to join your mysterious friend in the stable-yard, I won't keep you any longer." With a slight bend of her head she walked to the door.

"One moment!" he exclaimed, eagerly. "Did you see anyone else at Nun's Tower?"

"What is that to you!" casting a wondering glance over her shoulder.

"Everything. More than life or death!"

As she looked up into his agitated face, the truth suddenly flashed through her brain. "You are Victor Maitrevere!"

His head drooped. "For Heaven's sake, don't betray me!"

"What do you take me for!" she said, in gentle reproach, as her eyes filled with tears. "Not knowing you, but out of pity for your misfortunes, I have already done my best to help you."

"You have!" in grave surprise.

"Yes, I have," her cheeks flushing. "Wait till after Tuesday, and you will misjudge me no longer."

"By that time it will be too late."

"I know better than you."

"Has he told you?" scanning her face, eagerly, as if he thought he could draw the secret from her by the magnetic power of his eyes.

"If he had I shouldn't betray him."

"But I am only fighting for the right."

"You shall be cleared. Have a little patience and all will come right."

"Patience!" he exclaimed, scornfully. "After three years of living death I have outgrown it."

"But the end is close at hand. I can't say more." Then she opened the door and stepped out into the hall, anxious to get away before she let out more than she intended; and Mr. Mallon looked after her, his mind distracted with fear and hope.

CHAPTER XLIII.

EARLY that morning, before anyone was astir, Godfrey Somerville got on his horse and rode at a rapid pace along the lonely roads which led to Nun's Tower.

His face was white as the snowflakes which beat against it, and the circles round his eyes were as dark as the shadows under the gloomy firs.

Yesterday, for a few short minutes, delicious

joy was in his grasp; when that was lost he consoled himself, because he knew that at any moment he could put an end to his life as soon as it became intolerable; now, he was bound by a promise to live on, no matter how insupportable the days might be.

Hurrying on through the darkness desperate thoughts flitted through his mind. When the secret of Robin's existence was told to the world there would be no place in England where he could hide his head.

General execration would follow the man who had done his best to hang his friend, principally out of a fierce desire for vengeance, but partly out of a selfish wish to keep the taint of family madness a secret lest it should spoil his own prospects.

His actions had been produced by a web of conflicting motives, some of which were not wholly bad; but society at large would judge by facts and not by reasons, and pronounce his condemnation with the Pharisaical calmness of those who have never fallen, because temptation has not come in their way.

Sir Edward, that honourable, fearless gentleman, would never again shake him by the hand, or accept the shadow of an excuse for the smallest deviation from the straight path of honour.

Meta, poor little thing, would stick to him as long as she could, but she was too dutiful not to yield in time to parental persuasion.

Nella would marry Vere. "No, by Heaven, that she shan't!" he called out to the snow-tipped hedges. His voice startled a robin from his sleep, and he perched on a bough to look after the solitary passer-by.

Jealousy was rampant in the poor fellow's troubled breast. He could give up his hopes of the Somerville inheritance, he could vacate his place of honour amongst his fellow-men, he could let his name become a byword in civilised society, but he could not make up his mind to resign the girl he loved.

His love for Nella was like the first green leaf found in the heart of a desert of sand. He must keep it, must treasure it, in order to have the courage to live on.

She had behaved nobly in refusing to betray him, when he was completely in her power; and, in the first flush of gratitude, he had meant to do his duty, and make a clean breast of it before he died. Now different thoughts came into his brain.

If it were not for her he would have been dead by this time, and beyond the power of harming her. It was her fault, therefore, that he was alive, and she must take the consequences of her pious folly.

Thanks to her he might yet outwit them all. Robin might disappear from Nan's Tower and leave no trace behind her. Nella was the only person who had seen her; and he could easily prove that she had taken some other girl—a lady-love if need be—for his sister.

Yes, he could see his way to that; but still Nella would be lost to him—and that he could not endure.

If Turtle had not known the way as well as his master, they might never have reached the Tower, for he was far too deep in thought to guide him; but he had gone down the road so often at every hour of the day or night that he could have found the right direction by his own instinct.

It might be done after that ball at the Arkwrights, if she could be isolated from the rest and persuaded on some excuse or other to get into a carriage alone with him. It might be managed. With a clear start and a special licence in his pocket, she could be forced to marry him before anyone could get on their track.

Yes, it might be done, only earth would never have known such a dishonourable scoundrel before.

He drew his brows together with horror at his own villainess. Every sin of the Decalogue came easier to him than breaking faith with the girl who had trusted him.

A mile further on he found a salvo for his conscience. He would keep his word, and clear

Maltravers, even when Robin was safe out of reach.

She should not be exposed to the vulgar curiosity of the crowd. No doctors should come armed with certificates to test the power of her falling brain, as if it were a machine which had got somehow out of gear.

He would make her happy in some quiet corner, with Prendergast for her attendant, within reach of the small nest where he meant to shelter his love; and a letter should be written to his uncle, duly signed and attested by proper witnesses, establishing the fact of her existence, though still hidden from all eyes. Then Nella would be his!

The blood bounded in his veins, though the snowflakes were falling round him and the east wind whistling in his ears. His own love and cherish through all the years to come, with no cousin—lover or brother, which ever it suited him to call himself—to come between. To feel her little hand resting in his, and know that no one had the power to take it from his clasp!

The dull, dark morning seemed to blush into dawn at the thought, as he drew up just outside a spinney, about a quarter of a mile from the Tower; and leading his horse just within the bushes, and out of sight of the road, tied him up securely to a young thorn. Then he made his way on foot across wet fields, till he came to a gap he knew of in the yew hedge.

There was no one in sight; but he had an uneasy feeling that he might be watched, so waited for a few minutes under the shelter of a cimp of ivy on a broken stem.

After looking carefully in every direction, and being satisfied that there was no one about, he stepped quickly across the ditch and slipped like an eel through the gap.

Directly he gained the inner side of the enclosure he became conscious of a gaunt figure, which was slowly making its way towards him. Holding his breath he watched it coming nearer, in the uncertain light not knowing whether it was friend or foe.

"Seven o'clock, and he promised to be here!" The words were only muttered in a hoarse whisper, but he recognised the voice at once as that of Prendergast's, and stepping forward, he laid his hand upon her arm.

"Shall we go into the house?" he said, in a low voice.

"Better stay here. I think the doors are watched," and she drew back under the shelter of the hedge. Her nerves were made of iron, and she had not given the slightest start at the touch of his fingers.

"Could you be ready to-morrow night?"

"To-night, if you like it better."

"No, to-morrow; there will be plenty of carriages along the road, and one more or less won't be noticed. Drive straight to Coplestone, and take the train to Folkestone."

He paused as if in deep thought.

"Won't you be there yourself?" looking at the dim outline of his face in calm surprise.

"N—no. I think I shall have to go to Dover. It would be safer for us not to be together at first."

"She won't like going along 'o me, unless you come with us."

"Nonsense! you know how to manage her. Tell her that he is waiting for her, and she will go as quietly as a lamb. She seems none the worse for being out in the cold!"

"Only a bit of a cough, which will be all right when I've put a poultice on her chest. But drat them keys, I can't think what's become of 'em! Mischief will come of having all the doors unlocked, as sure as my name's Prendergast. But I can't send for a smith to make a set of new ones, as we want no strangers about the place."

"Not for the world! Surely a table or a chest of drawers will do for a barricade!"

"Yes, but there's no slipping them back in a hurry like you can turn a key in a lock. However, I deserve it all for my carelessness."

"You don't think anyone could have got in and carried them off!"

"Well, the doors as I always keep locked were all undone," looking down thoughtfully on the ground. "But I think if they had done that

they would have gone further, and stolen some of the silver which was lying on the table."

"But the doors couldn't have opened themselves!" impatiently.

"No, but I may have lost my head and left 'em open, when I found she had given me the slip. You may just say to me what you like. I deserve a horse-whipping, and I would almost let you give it me," and she hung her huge head in unexpected humility.

"Don't let it happen again, that's all that matters now. Do you think you could get on better in France?"

"Lor! Master Godfrey, what's the use! It would cost a sight of money to get us there, and she won't last long."

"But she's not ill?" hastily; "you said so just now."

"Not ill, but pining, and that's a sickness that no doctor can cure. Her cheeks are whiter than any eggshell, when she's not in one of her tantrums, and as for her hands, you can almost see through 'em."

A sigh. "Poor child!" he muttered, his heart full of pity; "we must fatten her up when we get her away from this dingy hole. I shall look out for the nicest lodging I can find!"

"And be sure there's a nice churchyard, with six feet of ground to spare in the prettiest corner."

"Confound you! you old croaker. I shan't care if there isn't a church or a parson in the place. You must be a widow lady travelling with her invalid daughter. Have you got all the tiggery complete?"

"Yes, it's been ready these two months past."

"And have you got enough of the needful?"

"Plenty. I've always had it on my mind that we must be ready to start off at any moment."

"You are a wonderful woman!" he exclaimed, in involuntary admiration. "Write to me under the old name, Poste Restante, Paris."

"Then you are off to them foreign parts yourself!" examining his face as well as she could in the darkness. "Maybe you are not going alone?"

"That is no concern of yours." He leant against a post for some time in deep thought.

"Dick will be left here in charge. I will put the place in the hands of a London agent, and tell him to dispose of it as soon as he can. It's a beauty hole and always gives me the horrors."

"A first-rate house for hiding, till those gentle came peering about out of idle curiosity," she said, sententiously. "I've a fancy they are at it again."

"Dance take them!" with a scowl. "I must be off. If you don't hear from me again, you know what to do. Threes o'clock sharp."

He was just on the point of slipping once more through the hedge, when he stopped to ask if Robin had plenty of warm wraps.

Prendergast said she had the furs which he had given her last Christmas, which "were as good as ever they was."

Thinking of his sister's comfort, he remembered his own discomfort, and, with an angry shiver, made the best of his way across the damp grass to the spot where he had left Turtle.

Perfectly unaware of the fact that Joe Stevens had listened to almost every word he said from under the shelter of some huge dock-leave in the ditch, he rode home in better spirits, satisfied with the probable results of his plans, and buoyed up with the hope of making Nella his wife.

The cold, grey morning broke, the snow-clouds rolled away, and one watery gleam of sunshine shot across the stable-yard as he gave his horse into the charge of a groom. With the superstitious natural to one of his nervous temperament he took it for a good omen.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A FEW hours later Meta was sitting in the billiard-room on a stool by the side of the fire, whilst Godfrey Somerville, who was lounging in an arm-chair close behind her, sent volumes of smoke out of a cherry-wood pipe, over the top of

her small, smooth head, with its neat little knob of sandy hair.

She had no idea that he had been out for a maturational ride, and wondered at the want of energy in his attitude and appearance, whilst he was thinking of her simple heart as a toy with which he had played long enough, and which he would soon be bound to throw away.

As usual, they were as far apart in mind as the two poles, and the girl's love was unable to bridge over the chasm, unless it was met by the man's.

Happily unconscious of this incapacity, Meta was serenely happy, because she had got him all to herself, for the first time for many days; and it was quite enough for her to be allowed to sit at his feet, and contemplate his handsome, haggard face at her leisure; no doubts crossed her mind.

It did not occur to her as possible that after she had promised to be his wife anything could part them. She was sure of her own constancy under any trial, and if he had not loved her sufficiently to wish for her more than any other woman, why should he ever have asked her to be his wife?

Men were fallible, that she must allow, but Godfrey was one of the most disinterested creatures under the sun, so could never have been tempted by sordid considerations of pounds, shillings, and pence.

Therefore nothing disturbed the serene ocean of her content, except, perhaps, a ripple of mortification, every now and then, when he seemed to be paying too much attention to Nella Maynard.

But as Nella always assured her that she disliked him there could be no danger from that quarter.

"Godfrey, you look so ill that I am afraid you really hurt yourself very much in that fall yesterday," she said, after a long pause.

"A pity I didn't hurt myself more, and break my neck," as he stopped to examine his pipe and discover why it did not draw better.

"Yes, if you wished to break my heart!" the colour coming slowly into her cheeks.

"Hearts don't break now-a-days, my dear girl," he said, composedly. "They are made of such tough material that they are warranted to wear in all weathers. It would have been the luckiest day in your life, and not half bad for me."

"I don't understand you," the corners of her mouth drooping.

"No, and you never will. We are about as much alike as fire and water, and one is bound to destroy the other, if they attempt to—come together!"

"Do you mean to say that if I marry you," speaking very slowly, "I shall destroy you?"

"One way, of course you would be my salvation, and the other, my d—, just the reverse."

"Why—why did you not say so before?" her thin lips pinched and quivering.

"Because I am the most selfish beggar under the sun, and only thought of myself. Could you be happy, little one, with a man whose ways and habits you know nothing of—whose thoughts and hopes were as far out of your reach as the top of St. Paul's?"

"I could," softly, like a breath.

"You would feel as if you were living in a hut at the mouth of a crater, guaranteed to explode some time or other."

"Still there might be some happy days first."

"And you are ready to chance it? By Jove! you are the bravest girl I know. Will nothing frighten you?"

"Nothing, so long as you remain the same. But, Godfrey," turning round so as to expose her earnest face to his view; "perhaps you want to get rid of me."

"Fancy a man wanting to get rid of one of the richest heiresses in Blankshire! My dear child, a pity there are no paupers to hear you; they might learn a lesson in humility."

Something in his tone jarred upon her sensitiveness, and the flush deepened on her cheeks, as

she said, quietly, "You have not answered my question."

"Because it wasn't worth an answer. To put it with brutal plainness—I am head over ears in debt, and some of your tin would be a very convenient help. Are you satisfied?"

"No, it sounds exactly as if you were marrying me for my money."

"What does it matter, if you know that I am not! Look Somerville to-morrow, and you will still be the good little cousin," fondling her chin, "who took pity on me and petted me, when nobody cared a jot whether I lived or died."

"But a cousin is different to a wife."

"Of course she is as inferior as milk is to cream. Half-a-dozen men might have you for a cousin, but only one can have you for a wife—and that is myself. I believe, had as I am, you like me better than anyone else."

"I do," she murmured, as she hid her blushes on his knees.

He put his hand on her head, and smoked on in silence, abusing himself for the want of resolution he displayed in his attempts to break off with this second love, before he was on with the third.

Only the day after to-morrow, and he meant to do his best towards making another woman his wife, and yet it went against him to tear down this bit of ivy, which clung so tightly to a rotten wall.

He pulled his watch out of his pocket and exclaimed that he must lose no time if he meant to catch the 1.25 train.

She raised her head in surprise. "Are you going up to town?"

"Yes! Can't help it—business."

"But you look tired out already. What are you going for?"

"Something that no one can get for me," thinking of the special licence.

"Pat it off till to-morrow."

"Not I. To-day I know to be mine, but I can't say as much for to-morrow."

"You talk so melodramatically, just as if you were a conspirator," putting up her hand to brush away a speck of dust from his coat.

"I told you you couldn't understand me," with an impatient frown.

"Never mind, I always like things and people that you can't make out at once."

"But it would be awkward if you never did."

"I shall some day," with quaint conviction.

"And when that day comes, you will say,

"Thank Heaven, he never was my husband."

"Godfrey, what do you mean?" shrinking back in a fright.

"I mean that you are out-and-out too good for me. Look here, Meta," laying his hands on her shoulders, "I mean it honestly. It would be doing you the best service I could if I cut and run."

"Then don't, for I should have to put my dignity into my pocket, and run after you. I can't think what has come over you—you never teased me so much before!" looking up at him, with a puzzled expression on her face.

"No! There never was so much need. Child, you are as simple and innocent as a newly-fledged chicken, and your imagination could never follow to the depths where I have gone."

"But I would pray Heaven to give you grace to be better. Oh, Godfrey," her small frame shaking with emotion, "however bad you are, or have been, I like you better than anyone else. Whatever you did, you would be quite safe with me; I would never turn against you—you must know that."

"If I didn't know it I could take it easily. I have never done you anything but harm. What in the world possesses you to like me so much?"

"You were here with us through all our trouble; and years ago, when we were children, you used to be very kind to me, and carry me over all the ditches that were too wide for me to jump. It grew with my growth, till I couldn't help it, any more than my freckles. Are you sorry?" suddenly aware of the unlovely-like expression on his face.

"Yes. Don't look like that," as her eyes filled with tears. "I am only sorry because you

have put your cargo in a vessel that is bound to sink."

"You should have thought of that before," with quiet dignity.

"I know; I've been a brute and a scoundrel, but remember I was always fond of you—and the temptation was too great."

Then he stooped and kissed her, letting his lips linger on her soft cheek, because he thought that it was for the last time. And she, dazed with doubt, and quivering with excitement, surrendered herself to his caress, not knowing if the love of her lover had dwindled down into the steady-going affection of a cousin, or whether she was as much to him as she had dreamt she was before.

The door opened, and a slight figure appeared on the threshold. Somerville withdrew his arm from his cousin's waist hurriedly, as if he had been caught in an illegitimate flirtation, when he had often kissed her in the frankest manner under Nella's nose, and Meta drew back with a conscious blush.

"I only came to find a book," and having found it, she prepared to withdraw, feeling instinctively that she had intruded at an unpropitious moment.

"Stay and have a game of billiards," said Godfrey, eagerly, his eyes lighting up at the sight of her.

"There is no time; the gong will sound in five minutes," wondering that he had the audacity to ask her.

"At any rate, we might begin, and finish the game after luncheon."

"We might, but I don't feel inclined," she said, coldly, as she moved towards the door.

Somerville walked quickly forward, and placed himself in front of her.

"I won't be treated like this," he said, in a low voice. "It isn't fair."

"Not fair!" and she opened her eyes to their widest extent.

"If it weren't for you I should be out of it."

"I haven't forgotten, but don't come near me or speak to me more than you can help."

"I must speak to you," he muttered, as he stooped to pick up her handkerchief. "Be in the library at half-past six."

She shook her head determinedly.

"Never again," then, in a louder key, "Have you been teaching Meta how to play?"

"No, she never will learn. Her hands are too small to handle a cue." He looked at her as if longing to say more, but she turned away her head so as to avoid his glance.

"You seem to have forgotten your train," said Meta, quietly, from the other end of the table, where she had been arranging the cloth.

"Never was such a head as mine," with an impatient sigh; "I forget everything. There's only just time to catch it. Order the cart, there's a good girl, whilst I run upstairs to change my coat."

CHAPTER XLIV.

ELEANOR MAYNARD walked about the houses, and went through her usual avocations that day as if she were in a dream. Victor Maltravers, the man whom she had heard of either as a hero of romance or a cruel murderer—according to the private convictions of the speaker—was under the same roof with herself!

Mystery was in the very air she breathed, and she waited for every hour as it passed by, expecting it to bring a crisis. The suppressed excitement of the position helped her to bear up better than she might have done after the sudden blow of Oyril's approaching departure for India.

She was miserable when she stopped to think; but her own misfortunes seemed swallowed up in the more important events which were about to happen to other people.

It seemed strange to see them all sitting round the table at luncheon with calm faces, as if there were no storm about to break and shatter to pieces the even courses of their lives. Meta was rather pale, but Lady Somerville was positively plaid, and her husband fully engrossed in

the discussion of a recent poaching case. Mr. Mallon ate cold beef as calmly as if to-morrow night promised only a commonplace festivity, and when he met her eye returned her glance with quiet composure, as if they held no secret between them.

Could it be that yesterday she was standing face to face with Godfrey Somerville in the boudoir, pleading with him to spare his sinful life, and not ruthlessly take it with his own hands? Was it but an hour and a-half ago that she overheard that mysterious conversation in the library, when life and death seemed to hang on the hour of three on Wednesday morning?

It seemed impossible that all this could have happened and left no outward sign. She herself had narrowly escaped the greatest danger that a woman can run only the day before, yet here she was, sitting at the table with the rest, and a plate of fried chicken before her.

After luncheon the three ladies went out for a drive, paid a few calls and returned about half-past four. Nella went straight to her room to take off her things, and stopped to write a letter to her aunt at Epsom before she went down. Christmas was near at hand, and there were a few old people in the village to whom she wished to send a small remembrance. They called her bright face sadly when she ran away from them; but ever since she left she had taken care that they should not think themselves forgotten.

How pure and innocent the quiet life seemed amongst the old-fashioned homesteads! Somerville's warning on the first night of her arrival had been fully justified. Everyone around her seemed to be weaving a web of intrigue; and her own feet, in spite of all her self-confidence, had been completely entangled in its meshes.

She left her letter open in order to enclose a post-office order, when she had been able to get one, and went downstairs expecting to find her aunt and cousin in the boudoir. The five o'clock tea was ready on the dainty little table, but the room was empty. Wondering where they had gone, she sat down in a low chair close to the fire, and prepared to warm her toes.

She had so much on her mind that it was useless to attempt to read, and she was not one of those praiseworthy beings who can never be happy without some piece of work between their fingers. There was a sound of wheels on the gravel outside, but she took no notice of them. Even if it were Cyril come back from town, he had taken care to show her in the plainest way that she was nothing to him, so she would not disturb herself on his account.

Nevertheless, the colour deepened on her cheeks as she heard the door open behind her and a masculine footstep on the carpet; but it was Godfrey Somerville, and not Vere, who leant against the mantelpiece and stretched out his hands with a shiver towards the fire.

"This is better luck than I expected," he said, after a long silence. "Thanks to my aunt's passion for charity, I get you all to myself."

"Has the flannel come?"

"I saw whole boxes of it on the library table—Meta with a pair of scissors as big as herself, aunt with her spectacles tumbling off the tip of her nose, and old Partington measuring off as fast as she could. Vere turned in to see if he could assist, but I came here."

"I must go and help them."

"Or talk to Vere—which is the most pressing!" he asked, with a sneer. "There is nothing for you to do, unless you wish to make him change his mind about India."

"That is no concern of mine."

"And yet you cannot rest here, as soon as you hear he is in another part of the house!"

"I might have another reason," her lip curled.

"Yes—to avoid me. And let me tell you, that isn't fair."

"Not fair? I don't understand you," waiting just as she was on the point of getting up from her chair.

"It is your fault that I am here at all," he said, suddenly.

"My fault? You ought to bless me for it."

"Much more inclined to curse you! It was

no part of the bargain that you should make my existence unbearable."

"You could scarcely expect me to tolerate you after yesterday!"

"Then why, for Heaven's sake, didn't you let me die?" he cried, vehemently, stung to the quick by her manner.

"Because that would have been too horrible," shuddering at the remembrance.

"You think slow tortures better? I tell you death would have been a joke to it!"

"You forget that there is a hereafter," her voice was low and awe-struck.

"I don't care a hang what happens to me when once I am in the grave; but whilst I am here in the flesh, conscious of every passion that ever fretted the heart of man, now is the time for you to prove whether your Christianity is worth its salt. Nella, you must listen to me. Treat me like a dog, and I shall know that you only stopped my hand for the sake of gratifying your own spite."

"This, when you owe me everything!"

"I owe you nothing. All would have been over by this time, and my sins would have been forgiven as they cried their hearts out over my corpse."

"What do you wish me to do?" looking up at him with bewildered eyes.

"Nothing much," with a small smile, "only to be friends for a day and a half." A day and a half when he knew that he had the licence in his pocket, which was to help him to find her to him for ever!

"But you insulted me," in a low voice, as she turned away her head.

"I was mad. You can't judge me by what I did, when it seemed as if the world had come to an end and you were the angel sent to save me from despair. Besides, you said you forgave me."

"I wish you no harm."

"That is nothing—a hypocritical evasion. Do you think Vere and Mallon are blind? Of course, if you don't speak to me, and look daggers whenever I come near you, they will know that something happened yesterday which neither of us cared to confess."

"I am not in the least afraid!" drawing up her neck.

"You might be. A doubt is everything to a woman—nothing to a man."

"Those who know me—"

"Vere, for instance. He has shown himself so blindly truthful."

"As if I cared what he chose to fancy!"

"As if you didn't! Well, you needn't try to humbug me. I have studied you till I know every in-and-out of your character. You are fond of him and you don't like me; he gave a gulp as if the admission stung in his throat; but I think in common charity you might contrive to hide your hatred for a day and a half. It isn't much to ask."

For a long time she looked at the fire without answering. In spite of all that he had done and left undone, her kindly heart pleaded for him at this crisis of his life. She could not doubt that he was intensely miserable. Every object of his existence was lost, and there was literally nothing left him but a shipwrecked reputation.

After Tuesday what would he be but a ruined, desperate man, without the power to harm her—possibly without the wish? She imagined Meta, forlorn and broken-hearted; robbed of her idol, cheated out of her sure possession; the hope, the happiness of her life bound to a dishonoured man. Her own injuries were as nothing compared with hers. She felt as if she herself could not have borne to find that Cyril Vere, her ideal of manly perfection, was infinitely lower than the lowest of the common herd. And Meta would have to bear this and worse.

"Godfrey," she said, with a tremble on her lips, "I did not mean to be cruel."

"I thought it was not like you," he said, hoarsely. "Oh, Nell! other people may preach and pray, but a true woman is better than a volume of sermons." He took her hand in his and stroked it tenderly. The mere touch of the soft, white fingers sent the blood coursing wildly

through his veins, but he made a great effort to control himself.

"Now go," trying to withdraw her hand, "and tell Lady Somerville that the tea is getting cold."

"Let it freeze," he said, carelessly. "Do you know, this morning I tried to do my duty by Meta, but she won't give me up."

"What did she say?"

"That she liked me better than all the world," with a shrug of his shoulders. "Strange infatuation, isn't it?"

"Very strange. I wish I could cure her."

"You've done your best."

"Oh, no. I could have done much more than that."

"You've hated me, and there is nothing so effective as example!"

"Then here might have had some effect upon me."

"No. You were set against me from the first. I made a pretence of hating you, but I knew I was a fool for my pains."

"On the contrary, I think you succeeded admirably; and even now you are on the verge."

"Am I?" with an ironical smile. Then he stooped his head suddenly and pressed his lips passionately on the back of her left hand.

Just then the door was thrown wide open by Vere, and Lady Somerville, followed by her daughter, came into the room.

Nella's cheeks grew crimson, but Godfrey looked round with the utmost unconcern, knowing that if Vere had seen, the others must have been too late.

"It was your own fault," he said under his breath, as with a bitterly resentful glance she wiped the soft, white skin with her pocket-handkerchief as if to erase a stain.

"I was just coming in to fetch you," she went on in a louder key.

"Were you?" said Vere, incredulously. "You seemed too comfortable where you were!"

"My dear Nella, why did you wait for us?" and Lady Somerville sat down in her usual arm-chair with a sigh of relief, whilst Meta took her place by the tea-tray.

"One hundred and seventy-eight yards of flannel. I thought we should never get to the end of them!"

"Seen the old lady?" asked Godfrey, with an affectionate of unusual friendliness. "Hope she's prepared to stump up something handsome."

An expression of disgust crossed Vere's frank face.

"She seemed to think I had done a service to humanity by pulling you out of the water."

"And you didn't tell her that you wished a hundred times that you could have kicked me back again? I suppose you promised to send in your papers, and devote the rest of your life to winding her shrouds of wool!"

"Of course. That sort of lap-dog existence would suit me exactly," glaring at him ferociously, while Nella looked dreadfully and thirstily at the fire, and wished that life were as soon over as a cup of tea.

CHAPTER XLV.

GODFREY SOMERVILLE stood on the hearthrug in the drawing-room with a red camellia in his hand.

Everyone was there, ready and waiting, for dinner except Nella.

Meta watched the flower with curious eyes, wondering what was to be its destination. She had some scarlet anthuriums carefully intermingled with delicate ferns on the left side of her neck, so concluded that it was not for her. Presently she saw him raise the camellia to his lips, as if in absence of mind, and felt convinced that it could be for no one else.

"Who is that for, Godfrey?" she asked, with a conscious smile.

"For Nella," he said, as coolly as possible. "Nobody thinks of her unless I do."

The colour rushed into Vere's face, but he constrained himself not to show his intense disgust. "You see you are the only man here,"



BOTH WERE UNAWARE THAT JON STEPHENS HAD LISTENED TO EVERY WORD FROM UNDER THE SHELTER OF A HEDGE.

he said, coldly, "who has a right to pick Lady Somerville's flowers."

"The only man who does, at any rate. Don't wait any longer, uncle; I am sure she would not wish it. I'll stay behind and bring her in."

Vere measured him from head to foot, as if he were looking for the precise spot on which it was best to kick him; but at that moment, with many blushes and excuses, Nella hurried into the room.

"Here you are, my dear," said Sir Edward, cheerily. "The young men were just going to fight for the honour of waiting for you."

When they went into the dining-room, Godfrey deserted his usual place to take the next chair to hers, and directly grace was said stooped forward and laid the carnation beside her glasses.

"Nella never wears red," observed Meta, from across the table.

"She will to-night," he rejoined, confidently.

And to Meta's intense surprise, she being unconscious of the friendly compact for a day and a half, Nella took up the flower with a pleasant smile and pinned it in the midst of the white lilies which she was wearing in the front of her dress.

It was a trifling incident, but Vere remembered that it only requires one straw to show which way the wind blows, and set his teeth in angry disappointment. What was the use of his giving up India in order the better to watch over her, if she were bent upon throwing herself away on a man whom she knew to be worthless? It would be only torture to him to watch her descent; and if he stretched out a hand to help her she was certain not to use it, but to push it on one side.

Lady Somerville roused him from his gloomy reflections.

"Is it true that we are to lose you and your friend on Wednesday next? It seems such a pity to break up the party such a short while before Christmas. I wish we could persuade you to stay a little longer."

"You are very kind, and I've enjoyed my stay here awfully," he said, with a smile; "but I'm

bound by an old promise to spend Christmas with the Arkwrights, and that will only allow me a few days at home first."

"And a very poor allowance, I should call it, if I were your mother," thinking how proud she would have been to have had this fair-haired soldier for a son.

"My mother is one of the best of women, and so contented with her lot that she can do without anything or anybody that she cannot get."

"How many years of deprivation has it taken to teach her that hard lesson!" shaking her head in gentle reproof.

"I assure you I'm quite an unnecessary part of the household. My cousin will tell you the same," in earnest self-defence.

"Many people think pleasure an unnecessary part of life," said Nella, with a quiet smile. "My aunt may be one of them."

Vere coloured.

"I was talking of myself, not pleasure."

"Your mother might think they went or came together. I'm not talking of myself," she added, hurriedly; "but mothers generally like their sons."

"She likes me, of course; but both she and my father take me philosophically, like a dose of medicine."

"A very convenient theory," put in Meta, looking amused, "when you want to spend your Christmas away from your own home. For my own part, I think if you don't go to Elstons you ought to stay here, where you have one relation at least."

Cyril cast one eager look at Nella, but her eyes were fixed on Sir Edward, who happened to be talking of the meet at Coplestone, though her ears were shut to what he was saying, and she missed it.

Bending down, as if deeply interested in the entrée on his plate, he said, hurriedly,—

"You have made her so thoroughly one of yourselves, a cousin is nowhere."

"Meta is her sister, and I am her brother,"

said Godfrey, coolly. "Somerville Hall will provide her with enough relations without troubling anyone else."

"You have got nothing to do with her at all!" broke out Cyril, furiously. "There is no tie between you of any kind whatever. Thank Heaven as long as I'm alive she needn't search the world for any other man to stand by her like a brother!"

Nella's eyes filled with tears, and her hands trembled in her lap. Meta looked anxiously from Vere's flushed face to Godfrey's, which was white with rage.

"I'll give up the relationship, but mind you stick to it."

"Unfortunately," said Mr. Mallon, trying to calm the troubled atmosphere with an attempt at a joke, "amateur brothers are apt to forget their parts."

"Not when there is no other left them," grimly from Cyril.

"What is that about being 'more than kin, and less than kind'?" inquired Lady Somerville, vaguely, perfectly unaware of the storm which was grumbling around her.

(To be continued.)

SHARKS were almost unknown in the Adriatic until the Suez Canal was opened. Now the harbours of Fiume and Pola are so infested with them that residents dare no longer bathe in the open sea.

ANYONE who has ever picked up with a bare hand a piece of intensely cold iron, knows that the touch burns almost as badly as if the metal were red-hot. Indeed, the actions of great heat and extreme cold are so similar that a Hungarian chemist has turned the latter to account to prepare meats for food. He subjects the meat to sixty degrees of frost, and then seals it up in air-tight cans. The result is that the meat is practically "cooked by cold."



"YOU LOOK THE PICTURE OF HEALTH, MY DEAR, BUT THEN YOU ALWAYS DO!" SAYS OLD SIR GEORGE, GALLANTLY.

BROWN EYES AND BLUE.

CHAPTER II. THE GREY LADY.

WITHOUT further preamble I must tell you at once that the grey lady is my Aunt Rachel, privately thus christened by her dutiful niece Cella, namely, myself.

Having an eye to colour of some kind, be it ever so subdued, aunt's uniform greyness is to me monotonous. There is a coldness of hue about it which chills one. Being brought much into contact with her gives one that peculiar small shiver which is known as "someone walking over one's grave."

Hair grey, not white or silvery with age, for Aunt Rachel is not old—fifty or thereabouts, I should think—though the exact number of years is carefully concealed, eyes grey, a cold steel grey, which would never warm the "frozen channels of one's heart."

Then she persistently dresses in grey; for what reason I could never discover, unless she desired to be a monochrome. Grey in the morning, grey in the afternoon, and grey on Sundays and high days and holidays. The colour may, perhaps, vary in tint, but it is always grey.

There is, too, a soft feline air and manner about her which I long since mentally likened to one of those fluffy-haired chinchilla cats, which are so rare and delicate, and so tigerish in temper.

If I was a true believer in the metempsychosis or transmigration of animals, I should assert that, once in the vista of long perished years, Aunt Rachel had been one of these grey-furred grimalkins in a better world, perhaps, and though a grade higher in the scale of humanity, still with the lingering traits of the dead animal.

She has, moreover, a knack of purring softly instead of talking—a silky intoning which to me is simply irritating. I always notice that when aunt purrs most she is mentally hatching something disagreeable.

I often wonder whether I really am "precious Cella," "my sweet kitten," "sweetest love," &c., which she is pleased to call me, or whether that is catlike sentiment. Instinct tells me aunt does not quite adore me as she professes to do, and I know very well that I do not adore her. The harmony is, therefore, perfectly reciprocal.

For many years past she has filled the place of mother to me; that is, as far as looking after my wardrobe until I grew up went, and trying her hardest in her silky way to wean me from Prue's tender care and idolatry.

This, however, she has found useless to try any longer. I love Prue, and Prue loves me. After father, I believe Prue comes first. Mother I have not. She lies in Marling Churchyard under the cypresses, and Aunt Rachel, *alias* the grey lady, reigns as Gable End in her stead.

When yet but a child I used to fancy how charming it would be if something or somebody took aunt away, and left father, Prudence, and me together. In a vague indefinite way the idea was blissful; the realization, however, has not yet come to pass, and my ripened judgment tells me that in all human probability only one thing will ever make aunt leave Gable End if she can help it, and that is death.

To this plain unvarnished idea have I come at last. Until grim death comes a-knocking at the door, aunt is "a fixture," and it troubles me now no more. What she wills, must be—a soft, purring, velled "must" if you like. To rule is her heaven, not with an iron rod, but dove's wing steel-tipped. Aunt without Gable End, father, Michael and me to rule, would be like a ship rudderless, and without a compass.

Gable End, house and lands, have belonged to the Lascelles for generations, without a single outsider of name or race to intermingle—a line of country squires, who superintended the tilling of their fields, the gathering in of their harvests, and the rearing of their own flocks and herds. While my Grandfather Lascelles still lived, my father fell in love with and married Lady Cella Marchmont, then on a visit to Sir George and

Lady Vacher, our nearest neighbours, at Marling Hall. It was purely a love-match, though my mother was a beauty and an heiress, and her people wished her to marry money too, but she preferred father and Gable End.

Father says to this day, though I don't believe he really means it, that mother loved Gable End the better of the two. When he says this I kiss him, and say, "You dear old darling, mother couldn't do that."

For the first few years of their wedded life they travelled abroad, principally in Italy, and there it was that the passion for art and all artistic things ripened in father's breast, fed and nourished on what it saw around. Then grandfather died, and they came home to Gable End, where three years after I was born, and my mother died.

Father did not rave or weep, fondly as he loved her, but he shut himself in the long low-ceilinged panelled room, which held all his art-treasures gathered abroad in their wanderings, and refused to be comforted. Then it was that, after a lapse of eighteen months, Aunt Rachel, widow to father's only and younger brother Gordon, in the Indian Staff Corps, who had died in India of fever a few years before, leaving a widow and one son behind him, not too well provided for, came. Aunt I believe, so Prue tells me, came down bodily, and took possession as it were of us, father recognising her intention of being useful by placidly giving way to her purring, indomitable will; and I at that period having no voice to spare, only clung to Prue and set up a beautiful squall when she wanted to take me from her.

Michael, a biggish boy at this time, used to come to Gable End for his holidays, and regarded it at length as his home.

As years went on aunt consulted father as to what Michael should be. Father said whatever he liked; at any rate, through what cozening I know not, Michael was installed as Gable End as manager of the farm lands.

I think father was glad to have the respon-

ability and trouble of what he cared little about shifted from his shoulders, giving him more time to read his "Divina Commedia," study his bronzes and cameos, and compile his treatise on integrities.

I have left Michael's description to the last. It is, however, not necessarily least.

Is he handsome? Perhaps—they say so, his mother loudest of all. Hair black as ebony, with his mother's steel grey eyes, swarthy skin, and clean shaven face. A soft manner when he chooses, also like his mother's, only without purr, and a harsh voice, modulate it as he will—not a Lancelotti in any way, except the ebony hair.

Father is fair, but Uncle Gordon and several of the former Lancelotti were very dark.

To add the final item to his inventory, Michael is my slave.

Why is it that one never does appreciate or care for what one can stretch out the hand and grasp without any extraneous trouble? Oh! for the waywardness of human nature. It is a horrible, but ever present trait.

If Michael were not my slave—if he never conceded to my smallest whims and fancies—if sometimes he said me nay, when it is always an eternal yes, I verily believe I should like him better. That is, of course, I like him well enough, but that is all. Aunt, too, is everlastingly throwing him at me, metaphorically speaking, and that is what irritates me. I don't want a man thrown at me like a ball I am expected to catch. I like to pick him up myself, of my own accord, without undue pressure.

To give aunt her due, her idolatry of Michael is sincere enough. Nothing is too good for him, and the only time when aunt's purring softness vanishes, giving place to an icy demeanour, the only thing which moves her sickness of manner and voice—the outward vane of sweetness—is when I refuse to listen to Michael's courtship, which is on an average about once a month.

Then the grey eyes scintillate ominously and a caustic, sneering remark will come from those thin lips, to be glossed over perhaps the next moment.

I don't want to be wooed. It's unnecessary trouble, as I constantly tell him. It only upsets all our apple carts, here, mine, and his for a day or so to no purpose. I hate being made love to, and I won't when I can help it.

"Don't you hev him at any price, Miss Cella," said Prue, one day, when I had confided to her that I considered Michael's wooing an unparalleled nuisance. She has no intense love for mother or son I know, though it would take a good deal more of the latter than aunt displays to make Prudence quit Gable End. Aunt tried it on once or twice, but found it no use. Prue, however, remembers this against her, and adds it up in her reckoning, I've no doubt.

"I don't mean to, Prue. Nothing might, could, or would induce me. It's bad enough to be worried with him now. What would it be if I married him? To be obliged to kiss him whether I liked it or not, and wish him at Hong Kong all the time. No thanks, Prue. I wouldn't marry him if there wasn't another man in Christendom. I don't want to marry anyone. I am quite happy as I am."

"S' you are, dearie. So you are," assuaged Prue, with considerable unctious, and there the matter ended.

I have been free from undue wooing for the last few weeks. I suppose Michael has been too busily engaged in farming operations to find time for it, and I have been consequently exhilarated. I feel, however, that it's looming in the horizon, that I shall not be exempt very much longer now. It's about due—overdue, I might say.

I confide, therefore, that we should be as little alone as possible, despite aunt's menacing; thinking probably of the old adage, "constant dripping wears away the stone," and wishing that Michael may get his way.

I have, consequently, this afternoon brought a book into the orchard, where, in a snug corner, screened from prying gaze, and slung from bough to bough, is a hammock which Peter under my direction slung for me.

I don't believe even my cousin knows of this

leafy haunt, and aunt never comes into the orchard if she can possibly help it; the grass is too long, and generally wat, she affirms—a phantasy I encourage with commendable vigour.

Here I now lie in drowsy content, the book unread, watching the circling gnats in the summer air.

"Cella! Co—lla!" calls a voice in the distance, evidently by the sound just inside the orchard gate.

"Bother," I ejaculate, discontentedly, to myself, recognising the owner of the voice, and knowing well enough that if Michael thinks I am in the orchard he will examine every apple and pear-tree sooner than not find me. I have never known him give up anything yet in my long experience of him, which is saying a great deal for his obstinacy of purpose.

"Cella!" he calls again, and the voice is getting nearer now.

Knowing the futility of attempted concealment, and that the fatal, ditch-dreaded hour has come, I lean out of the hammock and cry faintly,—

"Here I am, Michael. What do you want?" He comes swinging along over the long grass, making a deep step where he treads.

"I've been looking for you everywhere. I want to show you the mole-skins I've got for you as you wanted," he begins, taking four little soft-furred moles out of his side-pocket, which I thought looked bulky and ill setting, as he came towards me, and holding them out for my closer inspection.

"Poor wee things," I say, stroking the fur with my fingers. "I am almost sorry I asked you to get me some now; they were happy enough in the ground burrowing. Better have left them in peace, after all." I end, regretfully.

"I thought you wanted them so much," he returns, rather moodily. "I've been trying to trap these for a week past, and now you don't want them."

"I am sure I thank you very much for the trouble you have taken, Michael; I wish though"—half fretfully—"that you would not always take for gospel whatever I may happen to express on the spur of the moment. I never know my own mind two minutes together on those trivial kind of things. Why do you?"

"Why!" he echoes, stooping and laying the little dead moles on the grass, side by side, and drawing a three-legged wooden milking stool towards him to sit down, "because I'm a fool, I suppose!" bitterly.

"Oh, no!" I put in, with quick amiability, "that is not the reason at all! You do yourself an injustice when you say that, because you are by no means a fool—anything but a fool, in fact."

"Well, what is the reason then?"

"That's precisely what I first asked you!" I rejoined, still amiably, being in an argumentative frame of mind, and hoping that if we can only sustain a long discussion on mundanities, I may perchance escape the greater evil, and ward off whatever we are tending.

"Cella, why do you ridicule me whenever I speak? Will you ever be serious?"

"I really can't say! I should think probably not. I am not a member of the serious family, and I decline to belong to it. Anyway, I have no wish to ridicule you. I didn't think that a child like me could ridicule a man of your years. You give me credits for being more important than I thought I was!"

"You are playing with me!" he asserts, coldly, "but I will not be put off from week to week, month to month, like this."

Oh! won't you; I think to myself. You'll do as I choose about that, I rather fancy.

"No, this dalliance must end! I tell you Cella, you are breaking my heart!"

"Well, then, I'll buy and present you with a sixpenny bottle of diamond cement to put the two pieces together again," I rejoin, tantalisingly, which is wrong perhaps, under the circumstances; but I have become case-hardened from much experience, and cannot affect to feel the awfulness of the situation, as I otherwise might do.

"Pshaw!" he ejaculates, angrily. "You may

laugh as you please, but I am telling you the truth—though you don't seem to believe me!"

"On the contrary, Michael! You have told me the very same thing so often that I am fain to believe you at last. I doubt no longer, but if you refuse my bottle of cement, what will you have instead?"

"You know what I want, Cella. It isn't the first time I've asked you for it, so you cannot pretend to misunderstand me. I want your love."

"Do you?" I put in very hastily. "Well then, Michael, once for all, give up wooing, because it's one of those things you will never get. Have not I said so ever and over again? It's no use, indeed it is not," looking straight at him to emphasise my words.

The swarthy face looks back at me, and the harsh voice sounds a tone harsher than before, as he iterates, bitterly,—

"Cella, you are perfectly heartless."

"I very much fear I am. I have thought so myself before now. There is a nice round pebble where my heart ought to be. Why will you not take a pebble for answer? What would you have me say or do? I cannot pretend to adore you, can I?" elevating my eyebrows in real distress.

"I don't require that at all."

"Well, then, for goodness sake, say what you do want," I rejoin tartly, "for really, Michael, it's too tiresome. Upon my word, I don't believe you know yourself."

"Oh, yes I do, Cella!" he interrupted, eagerly. "I want you to marry me."

"Ah!" with a little gasp, for the blow has fallen at last, giving one foot a violent lunge out in the hammock, making it swing to and fro for a moment or so. "Well, then, I won't. I am not in love with you, and I don't see why I should marry you," raising my voice aggressively.

"I should make you love me in time."

"No, no. You would make me detest you, Michael, and pray then where should we both be, I wonder. A nice thing to detest your husband, I must say, and that is assuredly what I should do, if I did what you ask and married you! Now I know what is best for you, believe me, if you do not; and I say again—and do please let it be for the last time—that I won't marry you. Be sensible, cousin mine. If I happen to be the figurative moon in this case, do not like a spoilt child cry after it."

"Cella!" he begins, feverishly, getting up from the wooden stool and stepping to my side against the hammock; "you must marry me."

I sigh heartily, for my wise, counsel seems thrown away on him. He refuses to recognise and accept my no.

"You should never say must to a woman," I mutter doggedly; "because it only makes her more obstinate to take her own way."

"You must, you must!" he goes on, not heeding me; "how else will all the years of my life be bearable? Answer me that!"

"Can't," shaking my head, callously. "Give it up. Give me an easier riddle to guess."

"I swear you shall marry me," he asserts, forcibly.

"And I swear I won't. So as we have both relieved our feelings, and sworn according to our several minds, we will, as it pleases you, drop the discussion. We've worked it completely threadbare between us; I for one am sick to death of it," turning restlessly to and fro in my hammock. "And now, thanks very much for those little mole-skins. What a splendid warm cap they will make me for skating in; that is, if the winter is kind enough to bring in some ice. Ah!" raising my voice pleasantly; "here comes aunt, I declare; to tell us tea is ready, I expect. How the afternoon has flown, to be sure, I did not think it was so late; did you?"

He lifts his head, and without answering me, gazes at the grey figure coming floating near; then, still silent, he moves away rapidly through the apple-trees, and so to the green cornfield beyond.

Probably he anticipated questions and answers which, in his present frame of mind, he does not feel disposed to encounter. Anyway he leaves

me *afus*, in my hammock, awaiting aunt's approach.

"Tea is ready, Celia, dove," she begins, while still a few yards away from me. "Where has Michael gone?" seating herself on the milking stool which her son has but lately vacated. "I hope," with a very suspicious glance at my face; "that you have not been quarrelling with him!"

I always notice that aunt says "quarrelling with him," not has he been "quarrelling with you!" as if I was invariably the aggressor, which is rather unjust, considering the circumstances.

"No, aunt," I return as nonchalantly as I can. "We have not been quarrelling, because it always takes two people to make one quarrel, and I won't be one of the two."

"I think, my sweet pet," unctuously; "that you do not appreciate Michael's devotion as much as he deserves. Remember, my precious, that it is not every man who would put up with your whims and fancies as he does. His devotion is really something wonderful."

"Yes, he sticks to me like a limpet, I own," is a desponding voice. "I wish he would not!"

"Do not say that. I want my little niece to become my own sweet daughter in time," she begins, graciously, with an extra purr for the occasion; but I notice that the grey eyes shine a little harder than is their ordinary wont as she utters the charming wish.

"I would rather remain as I am, aunt, thank you," I rejoin, with cold outspokenness, swinging myself out of the hammock.

"You will not always be of the same mind, my pet. You cannot, remember, expect to keep your father and me by your side all your life long. We shall be called away, and then you will need a husband's tender care," with impressive solemnity.

I think to myself, that as far as her being called away to join the majority goes, the burden would certainly not be greater than I could bear, but I only murmur,—

"I don't want a husband at all. I won't marry, and I intend to be a nice old maid, and live at Gable End all my life—by myself," I end very pointedly.

The thin lips draw in suddenly. There is such a quantity of compressed acid that she is obliged to set them tight together, lest it should escape. The eyes give me one darkling sparkle, and then aunt says, very sweet and sugary,—

"Come, my dove, tea will be cold if we keep it waiting any longer, and Prudence has made you some of your favourite rusk. By the bye, Prudence is getting very old, almost past her work, I think; those old servants get garrulous nuisances when they become too old. I think your father would do wisely to give her some small present of money and send her away."

"I do not think it would be doing wisely at all," I answer, rather passionately; "I think it would be shameful, and I know dear father would not dream of doing such a thing. To turn Prue away because she's getting old! If she went, I would go too; I would not part with Prue for the universe. When I live here, by myself," very markedly; "I shall have Prue with me," and I stalk indoors.

I think I score one there.

CHAPTER III.

"Head of my father," said Lien Oh, "there are but two ways; the door must either be shut or open. I must either be natural or unnatural."

I HAVE looked at my silver sixpence a roving dozen times since I got up this morning. It is a source of trouble to me in some small sense. Like the old Chinese sage, Lien Oh, I too say "head of my father, there are but two ways," eliminating the following metaphor about the door. I must either keep it, or return it from whence it came. Truth to tell, I know not which to do. Indecision, like a persistent mosquito, comes buzzing and droning in my ears.

One half-hour I determine to go watercressing as requested, for I own I should like to see those very brown orbs once again, solely from woman's

curiosity. The next thirty minutes finds me morbidly prone to remain away. To go or not to go, for "the door must be open or shut"; go and avow my imposture, and return my hardly-earned guerdon, or stay at home, leaving brown eyes to pick his own green meat, and eat his bread-and-butter by himself.

We do not know very much about Mrs. Grundy down here, and candidly I lean feverishly towards the going. After all, it is only a little open-air comedy, and he and I the actors. It harms no one, not even ourselves for that matter; and it is certainly very entertaining; at least I find it so, whatever he may do.

I have nothing whatever to occupy my morning hours. It is so hot too. The river would be so cool and nice. I think—yes, I am sure. I will go.

Thus determined, I put on my old cotton-gown of yesterday, also the sun-bonnet, that is of itself sufficiently buxillo for my part, and with an empty basket I feel once more the watercress gatherer. I could even cry "cresses, fresh wa-ter cress—ess" all the way to the river, if there was anyone to hear, but the way is deserted enough to please a St. Simon Stylites.

Nearing my happy hunting grounds I feel a sleepish kind of thrill, as I look carefully round for the grey Norfolk jacket, but it is *non est*. No outward and visible sign of angling manhood occupies the foreground. No mortal divides the landscape with me. A few sheep browsing on the distant heath ground are the only living, breathing things besides myself in sight.

I suppose I must have fully expected that my angler of yesterday would be here this morning, or I should not feel as I do—decidedly disappointed by his absence.

I sit down on the bank, close to the watercress bed, and leaning my chin on my hands—a favourite position of mine—I gaze at the river meandering along on its everlasting way to where it feeds the great flapping, grinding mill at East Marling.

Over the water-mosses, past the butresses, swaying the yellow lilies, or taking with it in its clear depths shoals of tiny dace, darts along swiftly in goodly company.

There is a languorous charm in the summer morning, a dreamy restfulness in the murmur of the river, the swaying hush of the tall, sedge grasses. In the wood opposite coos a wood pigeon, like a lullaby.

I feel very drowsy—quite sleepy, in fact. Very little more would send me off into a sweet snooze. Oh! gentle sleep!

Ah! I open my eyes, suddenly, with a start, for positively I did go off—for how long I cannot say. I wonder what woke me!

Lifting my lids languidly I perceive a long shadow on the grass beside me, and someone says,—

"Blue Eyes! you were nodding!"

On the impulse of the moment I am tempted to take the bait by the horns, and, careless of discovery, answer,—

"Brown eyes! you are right. I was nodding. In fact, not only nodding, but asleep was I."

However, second thoughts, which they say are always the best, shows me that this is an ill-advised impulse, not to be given way to at any hazard.

So I only smile up at him in the sunshine and say, softly, still with that drowsy languor full on me,—

"Mornin', master."

"I am glad to see you've kept your word," he goes on, approvingly, drawing his rod out of the canvas case, and proceeding to put it together. "I dare say I can find something to give you to do. I haven't forgotten my bait to-day, that's one comfort, at any rate. What a lovely day it is!"

"Ay, it's right fair weather," I asseverate, with a country superiority to weather generally, watching him unwind his line and bait the hook.

"Right fair weather!" he repeats, imitating my intonation. "How little you country-folks appreciate the glorious sun, when you can call such a day as this only 'right fair'! It's ecstatic weather. Probably, though, you don't know what ecstatic means. Do you?"

I nod with composure.

"Ah! yes, of course, they teach everything in schools now, withedalem included. Well, have you spent your sixpence yet?" taking a cigarette case out of his breast-pocket, and lighting one of the contents.

"Naw," smiling, and, fumbling in my pocket, I bring it triumphantly forth.

"I see it has not burnt a hole in your pocket yet, or are you of miserly proclivities, and keep a balance at your banker's?" jokingly.

No doubt he imagines himself a very "Kleg Cophtus and the beggar-maid," bantering with a watercress-girl. I rather think he would smile the other side of his mouth if he knew how completely he is being deceived by a country mouse.

I make no response to the above, leaving him to infer that it is beyond the reach of my limited country comprehension.

"What's your name, Blue Eyes?" he asks, after a pause, drawing at his cigarette.

"Celia!" I answer, promptly, seeing no reason, in this case, at least, why I should not speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, to put it canonically.

"Well, Celia! let me tell you that I consider you a very creditable sample of Marling rusticity. I think, perhaps, Phyllis would be more suitable for you than Celia, though no doubt your parents knew best when they had you baptised. In my mind, however, you are more of a Phyllis than a Celia. I suppose you have never heard of either dandel for that matter, and I am talking double Dutch. Now, if I put it plainly, and ask you if you are not the village beauty, you will understand that fast enough."

I nod. The mandarin performance is so infinitely easier than speech that I adopt it on every possible occasion.

"Of course you do; and of course I am not the first man who has told you that, am I?"

On reflection I can call to mind that I have heard the same opinion expressed before, consequently, I utter a very placid "Naw."

"Naturally Hodge, or Strephon, or whoever the favoured swain may be, has considerably enlightened you on that point, so my observation has not the merit of extreme novelty. Celia, the bells of Marling! Upon my word, Blue Eyes, you almost make me wish that I was an arse. I'd draw you just as you are, basket of watercresses and all. Unfortunately I can't draw a straight line, much less the female form divine, so I cannot take advantage of you as a model. You might earn a good many silver sixpences that way if you choose. And now, as to Lubin. Who is he, what is he! How much does he earn a week, and when are you to be married?" lastly inquisitive.

"Lubin!" I echo, patting on the buxillo stare. I know well enough what he means, but I intend him to enlarge upon his small humour for my edification.

"My dear Blue Eyes, do not look so wholesomely innocent. There is always a Lubin or a Strephon in Arcadia. And Marling, seems to possess all the necessary attributes of an Arcadia on a small scale, including a ready-made Fayello, 'sweet and tender,' as the poet says. If you don't know what I mean by Lubin I will call a spade a spade, and say, in good old English, a sweetheart!"

"A sweetheart!" I echo, stupidly, getting a little red though, as I repeat it after him, for lack of something better to say for the moment.

To be veracious, I rather think that Michael might come under the above denomination, but whatever I may choose to do as an actress I will not bring any of the family into the argument, even if I did choose to make brown eyes my father confessor.

"Won't you confide in me!" he goes on presently. "I should like to hear all about Lubin very much. I think I could even go the length of promising a wedding present. There is a Lubin, Blue Eyes, now, isn't there?"

Constrained to make some kind of answer to this straightforward demand I mutter, low-voiced,—

"I don't know."

"Oh! you don't know, don't you," mocking

my Norfolk draw! "which means to say that you know, but you won't tell me. The question evidently seems distasteful, so we'll pass to a more congenial theme of discussion—namely, lunch. I supply the bread-and-butter, as per yesterday's contract, and you the watercress. Now I'll pick a handful and give them to you to sort and pick over ready for the repast."

I acquiesce in this sensible and amiable arrangement, and he drags up a large handful of dripping wet cress from his bed—cress and weeds all altogether indiscriminately, and deposits it by my side.

I am contentedly engaged in picking out the little bits of moss and weed from the watercress, when the unmistakable sound of voices floats towards me on the calm, still air. Looking up quickly enough, my senses all on the alert at the instant, I see two figures coming round the bend of the river and along the country road within a few yards of the bank—Sir George Vacher and Michael!

Sir George is bestriding his favourite roan cob, which he keeps at a foot pace, while Michael walks alongside—the two evidently discussing some weighty farming matter, for Sir George owns a good deal of land about, and goes in for farming rather extensively, often, however, deferring to Michael's judgment, of which he has a high opinion. Deservedly so, I am sure, for since Gable End has had his watchful managing eye it has increased in value vastly. Hence we have really much cause to be grateful to him for his watch over our interests.

Now, of all people in the world appearing on the scene, along that unfrequented road, where perhaps a couple or so of ploughmen are the sole passers-by per diem, I'd as lief it should not be these two, Michael especially. Indeed I marvel he should be here, for it is completely out of his beat.

It almost seems to my distorted imagination, as if he came on purpose to mar my little comedy of errors, and hasten the dénouement.

There is no use in bemoaning the untoward circumstance, however. The only thing is to look the matters straight in the face, and meet the situation in the best manner possible. It is hopeless for me to hope he may pass by and not see me. The road is so close to the hawthorn—too close, alas!—and in another minute I shall be presented full in view.

The angler is supremely and blissfully unconscious of the perturbation of my mind at this juncture; and it is only when they get quite near that he lastly turns his head from the river to scan the approaching pair. It is a matter of no moment to him who "passes by this way," but to me!

I try to assume an unconsciousness I am far from feeling, keeping my head encased in the sun-bonnet diligently turned away from the road, sorting the watercress as if my daily bread depended upon the swiftness of my fingers.

If for a brief second or two I dream that they may perchance, by some wonderful freak of Dame Fortune's, be so engaged in their discussion as to pass me by unnoticed, I am wakened from my pleasant dream by Michael's voice.

"Colla!" he exclaims, in a tone of the deepest amazement, stopping short and eyeing where I rest under the hawthorn; I hear, too, that with the amazement mingles also disapprobation.

"Yes! Colla!" I remark, defiantly, eyeing him back from my sun-bonnet.

"Gin I maun doy—I maun doy!" as the man said, and since a *dénouement* must come let it be over and quickly done.

Sir George has checked his cob on seeing Michael stop, and utter my name.

"Ah, my dear! How are you?" he says pleasantly, leaning from his horse to shake hands with me, for I have risen and gone over to them.

"Quite well, thanks, Sir George," I return low voiced, hoping that the angler, those very few yards away, may not hear that all traces of my late sing-song lingo have disappeared—"S'fely and suddenly vanished away," like the baker in "Hunting the Snark." Also wondering, if he hears, what he thinks of it all.

"You certainly look the picture of health, my dear, but then you always do, for the matter of

that," says old Sir George, gallantly, patting the cob's neck to keep him still. "How is it we haven't seen anything of you at the Hall lately? Lady Vacher has got some new sunflower patterns from London to show you when you come. Oh! and tell your father from me that I've bought a new picture, a copy of a Velasquez—they tell me it's almost as good as the original itself, but I want him to come and give me his opinion of it before it's hung. I expect he's seen the original, and will know at once whether it's a good copy or not. I shall be at home any evening this week, tell him from me, and I've a first-rate cigar to give him. Say I hope he'll come soon. Don't forget, now."

"No, I won't forget. Father will be delighted I know, at the chance of seeing a good picture."

During this colloquy Michael has been standing silently by, eyeing the angler's back with a lowering glance.

I mentally wonder what this fisherman thinks, and edge round a little to see if he is taking any notice of the group near him.

No; from appearance, seemingly not. He is standing very upright on the bank, in exactly the same spot that he was—stiffly upright, it strikes me, holding his fishing-rod with both hands, as if his life depended on his keeping it in that one position.

For all or any movement on his part he might just as well be an automaton angler—a duodecimo edition of Psycho or Zola.

"I must be getting back to the Hall for lunch," puts in Sir George, turning to Michael. "Thanks, Lucelles, for those hints of yours about that land drainage for the brakefield. I'll have it begun at once. The men shall begin on it to-morrow. That brake has been an eyesore to me for years past. Perhaps you wouldn't mind giving a look at the men now and again while they are on the job."

"Yes, certainly I will, with pleasure, Sir George," responds my cousin, still with steel grey eyes fixed on the automaton.

"Thanks! there's a good fellow. I'm much obliged to you. Good-bye, Colla, my dear! Don't forget to give your father my message, and come with him. Lady Vacher is always delighted to see young faces about her. Good-bye!" and the old baronet, raising his hat, trots away on the roan cob, and is soon lost to sight.

I look after him till he turns the corner over the red brick bridge, wondering what will happen next—what epilogue will be spoken to my comedy! We all three stand in grim silence. A dummy trio. Then grappling with fate, and taking the bull by the horns, I look full at Michael and utter a monosyllabic "Well!"

He, facing me, answers coldly,—

"What are you going to do? Are you coming home, or are you going to remain here?" with a glower at the unconscious broad back.

"I really don't know!" contemplatively;

"what are you going to do?" indifferently.

"If! Oh, I am going home," with emphasis,

"you, of course, can please yourself."

"I am fully aware of that," I return somewhat shortly, for Michael speaks to me exactly as if I were a naughty child. Perhaps I am, I am not sure. "What time is it?" I inquire, as if time were the only obstacle in the path of my remaining.

"Ten minutes to one," taking out his watch, and surveying it for my benefit.

"Dear me, I had no idea it was so late. I suppose I had better come too."

"I should say you had," he mutters, with a significant glance at the automaton fisherman; "but, as I said before, please yourself."

"I fully intend to," I rejoin, jauntily, fully determined not to be nonplussed at any price; and having thus signified my intention I move closer to the hawthorn with the intention of regaining my basket, while Michael snunters forward a few paces in advance.

Then it is that I cannot make up my mind whether to pick up the basket and walk off without another word; or to say something, and what! Apology seems out of place; besides I am not one atom sorry. Why should I be! It was his fault in the beginning. A return to the

Norfolk lingo is ridiculous. The joke will at once lose its exquisite point.

Bother the man! I wish he would help me in this difficulty. If he would only turn round and laugh, or say how much he enjoys the merry jest, it would be so much easier for me; but no "tattered boggart" in a field to scare away birds was ever more stolidly unmovable than my late genial, pleasant companion. Strange that he seemingly cannot regard it in the same light as I do. Strange, but true.

A moment's irresolution, then I march boldly up to that broad back, and say, somewhat feebly I own,—

"I am going now."

It is no very startling remark, but at the sound of my voice, my own original one, not the country drawl, evidently addressing him, he turns swiftly, and faces me. Never, no never, shall I forget the expression of his face. It is full of the most intense and unconcealed mortification. Perhaps he considers himself an injured individual.

"I am going now," I affirm again, partly to break an uncomfortable silence, partly to force him to make some kind of answer, be it good, bad, or indifferent. "You can keep the basket of watercress if you like!" I end, amiably, to show him that I at least am not cross.

He lays his rod down flat on the bank, takes up the basket, and hands it to me.

"I would not deprive you of it for worlds!" he answers, stiffly, all the pleasant, smiling geniality of half-an-hour back vanished from voice and manner. It makes me feel, somehow, that I have been a naughty child, and yet I really did not mean to be! That he is huffy is most evident.

"It is not depriving me at all!" I murmur, quite quashed by that freezing tone; "If you wish to have them—pray keep them!" and I tender him back the disputed basket of watercress, hoping he may accept it in the light of a peace-offering. But no.

Taking off his hat, he makes me a low, sweeping bow as if I were a duchess, and says,—

"Good-morning!" distinctly ignoring my olive-branch in the shape of watercress. Then he deliberately turns his back on me, takes up his rod, and goes on fishing before my very eyes.

The tinge of irony in that sweeping bow, bare-headed, and cold polite "good-morning," annihilates me. It says as plainly as it can—

"Go, I am disgusted with you! You have been making a fool of me; go." A mute reproach.

There is nothing further to be said or done. The epilogue to my little comedy has been spoken. Yesterday I made my début, to-day make my exit. *C'est tout fini.*

Basket in hand, I trudge after Michael, lingering on the road, some paces away, his hand in his pocket. We walk on silently for a moment or two, then he says, abruptly,—

"Who's that man, Colla?"

"Which man? What man? Where?" I answer, quickly, looking all round me as if I expected to behold some wondrous novelty in the shape of mankind on the horizon, knowing quite well in my inner consciousness who he means; but by this time I have recovered a little from my total annihilation, and ready to do battle on the smallest provocation.

"You know what I mean," he jerks out, snikily; "though you pretend you don't."

"But I don't see any man, Michael," endeavouring to be jocose.

"Well, that fisher fellow on the bank you were hob-a-nobbing with when Sir George and I came up."

"If by 'that man' and 'that fisher fellow' you happen to mean that gentleman," with emphasis, who was standing near me holding his fishing-rod, and trying hard to catch some fish when you came on the scene, well, I am extremely sorry to inform you that I really cannot answer your natural inquiry, for the very good reason that I do not know."

"Not know!" regarding me amazedly, "do you mean to say that you are in the habit of picking up any stray snob who may chance to

come fishing the Marling river from Heaven knows where."

"And Heaven has at present kept the knowledge to itself," I return, jocosely, "but I certainly did not mean to say it, and I don't think, moreover, that I did say so. As to picking up a 'stray snob,' as you obligingly designate him, the gentleman you speak of weighs, I should think, at a casual glance, quite eleven stone, if not more. Not being a female acrobat, or a strong woman of the company, I could hardly 'pick up eleven stone odd, as if it were a ball of cotton wool. Your remark, Michael, is not apposite at all, believe me," smiling pleasantly; but my cousin refuses to be anything but sweetly grumpy, meeting my witticism with a surly,—

"Pshaw!"

"And also 'Pish!' and, maybe, 'Pooh!' " I quote, soberly, for by this time my spirits have considerably risen.

"You are perfectly incorrigible, Celia!" disgustedly.

"I am, Michael, incorrigible. I wonder you take so much interest in me as you do."

"Cannot you see for yourself that such a proceeding is, to say the least, extremely—well, extremely unconventional."

"I hear it now certainly," nodding my head.

"And pray," he begins again presently, in what he intends for a sarcastic tone of voice, seeing that I will not cry "pocari" as he wishes me to do, "if I may be permitted to be so curious on what may not concern me, for how long have you condescended to make a companion of this man? How long has it pleased you to gather stray comrades in your morning wanderings as opportunity offers—for a day, a week, a month past?"

"Let me see now," I return, thoughtfully, as if trying to remember. "Was it a week, or a month, or a day? I am inclined to think it must be only a day when I come to think about it. Yes, a day—twenty-four whole hours!"

"Oad of a fellow!" he mutters, unable to find a vent peg for his wrath.

"Well, is there anything else your royal highness would like to cross-question me upon while the subject is red-hot, because 'dis chille' is ready and willing? You shall be permitted to be as curious as you please."

"I shall make it my business to find out who the snob is," he grumbles on, unable to parry my badinage.

"Do, Michael," I acquiesce cheerfully; "do, and I for one shall be eternally grateful to you; for, to tell you the truth, I am awfully inquisitive on that very point myself. I was dying to ask him his name, race, age, and occupation all the time, only I hardly liked to. Now, it will come over so much nicer from you than it would have done from me. In fact, while curiosity is still strong upon you, I should just run back now and ask him for his little bit of pasteboard. It would save a good deal of unnecessary trouble in the future, and satisfy both our inquisitive minds at one and the same time, unless, of course, you prefer the more dignified method of ferreting out what you want to know. But as you said to me just now, 'you can please yourself.'"

Michael's feelings on my harangues are clearly too deep for words. He neither follows my admirable advice, or vouchsafes me a word of thanks for it, but stalks along by my side completely unmolested, his lips tightly closed. He knows by this time that an outburst of temper, no matter how angry he may be, does me no harm, and himself no good.

When Michael is most ill-humoured I am correspondingly amiable. I will not quarrel. We might, had I allowed myself to be upset, had a fierce wrangle over the poor fisherman—a war of words and looks, ended goodness knows where; but that I have successfully staved off.

As we reach the orchard swing gate I put my hand on his arm.

"Poor old thing!" I murmur, nothingly. Then I run along the narrow path to the house, and leave him to follow with mollified wrath. My *petite comédie* is over, and the curtain drops. Strange, but I am sorry that it falls.

(To be continued.)

A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE.

—10—

(Continued from page 438.)

Slowly it dawned on her that probably her husband's jealousy might be known, that perhaps she was believed guilty, and so she had been punished.

She started up, a red spot on either cheek, her eyes flashing.

"How dare they! Oh! how dare they! I will not endure it; I will fight it out! I have lost happiness and love; I will not lose my good name."

She shivered as if with cold, though, indeed, her face and hands burned feverishly.

"Oh," she said, again, thinking now of the Duchess, "to-morrow I will compel her to tell me all! It is not wise or kind to hide it from me!"

It was very late, but Frederick did not return. She waited hour after hour, hoping he would come, and all unconscious of the part he was even then playing, not knowing that her wrongs were being avenged in part in the presence of a crowd of men.

Oliver, on leaving her, had gone straight to the club, where he found Frederick playing *carté*. He looked up and nodded to the lad, who returned his salute with a stony stare, and passed on.

A man asked,—

"Are you not on good terms with Greatorex?"

And the boyish answer was,—

"I should think not; nor with any other blackguard."

When Frederick had finished his game, he walked over to Oliver.

"What is the matter, old boy?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness.

The youth bent his fine, frank eyes full upon him.

"You know very well; but I am willing to shake hands and be friends if you will return to Lady Greatorex."

His cousin muttered an oath under cover of his monstache.

"So you are on her side!" savagely.

"Yes; as every true man must be who knows the facts of her case. I have seen the Duchess, and she has considerably enlightened me as to the state of affairs."

"Look here, Oliver," Greatorex said, loudly and fiercely, "the Duchess is my enemy, and my wife's friend; she is willing to blacken me to my acquaintances, and make me appear the sinner. If you come from Lady Greatorex, you may return and say, for the disgrace she has made me suffer, she shall suffer double; say, too, to Ormsby, he shall not go free. I will brand him with shame."

There was a sudden hush in the room, and, turning, the cousin saw Maurice standing in the doorway, with a white and wrathful face. Neither ever forgot his look as he swung with his long stride into the centre of the room, and held up one hand as if demanding attention.

"Gentlemen," he said, and young Oliver placed himself beside him, "I demand a hearing. Yesterday Lady Greatorex was treated with shameful discourtesy, and her husband was not near to defend her or protest against it. Shall I say why? There is a horrible conspiracy on foot to deprive her ladyship of position and honour. Some man is needed to bear the brunt of the evil. I am that man—I, who, until lately, was the friend of her husband."

Greatorex attempted to speak, but a score of voices cried him down, and Maurice went on,—

"My lord is weary of his wife, and would be rid of her. He leaves her to her own resources, unless, indeed, she will accept the escort of his friend. My lady is unacquainted; she appears everywhere with this man; and when the plot against her peace is ripe for execution, reports not only scandalous, but devilish, are set afloat concerning her. Her name is coupled with that of her husband's friend; and I say the man who set the life agog was, and is, my lord, and that his ally is a woman whose name for the present shall not be divulged."

"You lie!" Greatorex broke in, madly, afraid lest detection should ensue.

Oh! that Valentine were at hand to help him with her ready wit.

"Prove that I lie!" Maurice retorted, in a white rage.

Greatorex sprang upon him and clutched at his throat; but Maurice was the stronger, and he flung him off; then, before anyone could interfere, blows had been exchanged, and Greatorex had an ugly wound on the cheek, whilst his mouth was bleeding freely.

Then men rushed in and stayed the fight, and some led "my lord" away, he coming and struggling, and swearing to have his revenge.

Maurice quietly wiped the blood from his hands that had flown from his antagonist's face—he, himself, had received no wound; then he flashed on the assembled men.

"Let no man dare to couple my name with that of Lady Greatorex, either in my hearing or to my knowledge; and let no one dare to speak lightly of her in my presence."

Then he moved to the door; but many a hand was extended to him, for, despite his taciturnity, he was well liked; he had done so many "good turns" to fellows in his set in that quiet, unobtrusive way of his, and there was scarcely a man who could really and honestly believe the accusation brought against him. Maurice replied to all their kindly speeches, then broke away from them, and, reaching the door, found Oliver beside him.

"Let me go with you," the lad entreated, and the other made no remonstrance; so they stepped out into the lovely starlit night together.

(To be concluded in our next.)

OPALS AND DIAMONDS.

—10—

CHAPTER XXVI.

"YOU NEED NOT FEAR, SWEETHEART."

MAGGIE felt strangely desolate after the death of her father. They had loved each other so devotedly, with a perfect affection that does not very often exist between parent and child. He was the last link that bound her to the old life; she had not one of her own family left near her, and she felt alone, despite the great love of her husband, and the clinging affection of her little child, for she knew that Sir Lionel might be lost to her some day, in a worse manner than by death, and the knowledge prevented her being able to console herself fully by leaning on his love and protection, as she was but too well aware that at any minute she might be deprived of it. Of course it was not likely, yet the dreadful doom that hung over the male members of his race might fall on him at any moment, and leave her worse than widowed, so she was sorrowful and restless through the dreary winter that followed.

She tried to get rid of her sad thoughts by going among the villagers and poor people, and relieving their several wants and necessities, in all of which efforts she was ably seconded by the indefatigable Mrs. Truelove, but after Christmas she lost her.

Mr. Truelove was appointed to a populous parish in London, and went thither, and the old Parsonage was shut up, and one of Mr. Travers's curates officiated at Wingfield church—a sanctimonious young man, who wore bulgy boots and baggy trousers, carried an umbrella of the "gamp" order, and sported a shoval hat of such gigantic dimensions that it would have excited sentiments of envy and admiration in even the breast of an elder from the great Salt Lake City.

Sir Lionel cordially disliked this reedy-voiced young man, with his unwholesomely cadaverous complexion, and his ferret-like eyes, which were afflicted with a perpetual spasmodic, double-barrelled wink, so always drove into Inshfield

church, and Lady Molyneux went with him, and thus her parish work ceased to be a personal pleasure to her, and her charities were doled out by hirelings' hands, and she gave herself up almost entirely to the occupation of adoring little Jack, whose sedate, winsome ways were irresistible, and made her almost idolise and worship him, forgetting the commandment that tells us we must not bow down to or worship anything on earth.

Still it was excusable, perhaps, in her case, for she seemed to have little else to love and worship during those chill winter days, when,—

"Snow-cold and white the landscape spread
A waste beneath a leaden sky."

Sir Lionel being often away on business, and her mourning for her father preventing her from holding high revel at the Hall, and dooming her to "sad solitude."

She was often dull, often lonely, often passionately regretful, after she had seen her husband ride away, knowing that he must be absent for several days, and would wander aimlessly through the magnificent rooms of her paternal home, till she saw her boy coming from his morning walk in his nurse's arms; then all her languor, all her sorrow, all her sorrow for her father would vanish for awhile. She would go to the nursery, and,—

"Lo, with sudden sun and flowers,
The winter world was charmed to Spring."

She forgot everything as she played with the golden-haired cherub, and sang to him softly, and tried to make him smile, and lose his habitual angelic expression of gentle resignation, which somehow or other gave her such a sharp pang at heart sometimes, she hardly knew why.

She was not sorry when the reign of King Frost came to an end, when the ice broke up, and the snow melted, and the great queer-shaped clouds, like huge scarred mountain peaks, dispersed, and that primrose colour at times filled the sky which tells that spring is close at hand, and the rocks began to build in the tall, naked elm-trees, and the pale snowdrops and modest violets looked up at the heavens again, instead of burying their beauties amid the withered stems that once bore the blossoms of a spring numbered in the sad roll of bygone years, and the bright blue of the ground ivy, and the burning gold of the crocus, made touches of bright colour amid the flowers, and the comforting sunrays came streaming through the golden gateway of Heaven, lighting up all the earth with their refulgence and brilliance, and she could wander in the gardens and the woods that lay around the Hall, with her baby in her arms, letting him just toddle a few steps now and again, and then catching him up and perching him on her shoulder, bounding along like a young gazelle, forgetting all the stateliness and dignity she ought to have assumed as Lady Molyneux of Molyneux Hall.

"Going to hunt to-day, Li?" she asked one morning towards the end of March, as her husband came into the breakfast-room, resplendent in pink.

"Yes, love. The last meet of the season."

"The last? Where do they meet?"

"At Sittingdale."

"And this is the very last one?"

"Yes, the very last. Are you glad?" There was an exultant ring about "last."

"I think I am a little bit."

"Why?"

"Because I am always afraid of your meeting with an accident," she answered, looking at him tenderly; "and then I shall see more of you. I lose a great deal of your society not being able to ride."

"Would you like to learn, dear?"

"No, thanks; I think not. I have not enough courage to make a good rider, and you wouldn't let me ride to hounds, I suppose, so I shouldn't gain much by it."

"Well, no, Maggie, I would rather you didn't. I don't like to see women in the hunting field, flying over hedges and ditches, going along as hard as they can at the imminent risk of breaking their necks."

"Then you see it wouldn't be much use my

learning," she observed, with a charming smile, "as I should not get more of your society by so doing."

"Haven't you enough of it now, little wife?" he asked, going over and kneeling beside her.

"No," she answered, putting her arms round his neck and resting her cheek on his. "I should never have enough of it."

"Not if you saw me every day for twenty years, without a single break!"

"Not if I saw you every day, and all day long, for a hundred years, without being absent from you a single minute."

"Darling!" he ejaculated, kissing the soft lips near his own. "And will you always love me like this?" he queried after a pause.

"Always. What should make me change?"

"I don't know. You might."

"I think not; and you, Li—will you always care for me as you do now?" she whispered, looking down at him with her lovely eyes full of an inexpressible tenderness.

"My dearest, need you ask?"

"Yes, I want to know. Something might change you, might make you cease to regard me as you do now."

"Nothing could do that. You need not fear, sweetheart; you have everything to keep me," and then he kissed the little hands he held, and pressed them against his heart, ere he left her to mount his horse, and ride off to join the ardent throng of sportsmen that waited for him in Inchfield Woods.

The shades of evening had fallen over "Mother Earth's" wide bosom before Sir Lionel returned, and when he came he was not alone; Terence O'Hara, Lord Sittingdale, and Henrique Clinton came with him.

Maggie started with surprise on seeing her former lover; she had no idea he was staying at Sittingdale Manor, though she knew young Clinton was, and for a moment the old sickening sensation of fear seized her, chilling the bounding blood in her veins; but she recovered herself as the Irishman greeted her, a smile on his lips, a light in his blue eyes that made him look more like the Terence of former days, and did away with the sinister, repellent expression that of late had habitually rested on his handsome face.

"You are doubtless surprised to see me, Lady Molyneux," he began, in his most fascinating manner.

"I am a little," she answered steadily, suppressing the emotion she felt. "I did not know you were staying at Sittingdale, so the pleasure is unexpected."

"Thanks, I only came down two days ago for a breath of fresh air. I have been working very hard, and felt I wanted a change."

"Yes, I hear you have been very successful of late."

"Yes, fairly so," he acknowledged, with a slight curl of his lip, for he had made a perfect fortune during the past year, and his popularity grew greater every day.

"Did you have a good run?" asked the fair hostess, when the gentlemen doffed their mud-spattered pink and donned their swallow tails, and they sat at dinner in the great dining-room, where a bright fire blazed up the wide chimney, and the pink candles threw a rosy glow over the table loaded with good things, and snowy napery, and sparkling glass, and glittering gold plate.

"Splendid!" responded Clinton. "Never remember a better."

"And were you all in at the death?"

"No. Only O'Hara and the hunt—" he had that honour. "We were left behind. No, so well mounted, you know."

"Why, Li," she exclaimed, looking at her husband, "I thought Pearl was the fastest horse in the county!"

"So did I," he answered, smilingly, "but you see we were mistaken. O'Hara's thoroughbred bay surpasses her."

"Yes," thought the Irishman, as he looked from the exquisite fair face of the wife to the handsome dark one of the husband, "and I will surpass you yourself, and win the day yet."

"I am surprised," continued Lady Molyneux.

"Your horse must be a very fast goer," she added to Terence.

"He is!" he agreed. "I never rode a faster."

"Cost you a small fortune, I suppose?" observed Lord Sittingdale.

"Three hundred guineas."

And Maggie almost exclaimed with astonishment when she heard the price, for she began to realize what large sums the man she had known as a struggling artist must receive for his pictures. "Is he your favourite hunter?" she inquired.

"Yes, I like him better than Mars or Blight."

"What queer names for horses!"

"Yes, they are rather strange, but I give most of my things queer titles, and do queer things too, sometimes," and he looked at her fixedly as he spoke, and she felt a shudder run through her, as though a blast of the chill March wind had penetrated to the warm, scented room, and swept across her.

"Do you?" she said mechanically, and then added quickly, with a visible effort, "Tell me about the run?"

"Well, the hounds were first taken to Inchfield Gorse, where a great crowd of people had gathered. There were mall phaetons, filled with ladies; pony carriages, driven by fair demoielles in taking costumes, dog-carts bringing men who had sent their hunters on before, huntmen, pedestrians, dogs—a motley throng, moving slowly round the covert."

"After a little delay the hounds were thrown into the brushwood. The pack were every bit as keen as the riders. They went to work with a will, their tails twinkling here and there amid the scrubby oaks."

"Then the Talley-ho! rang out. Toot, toot, toot! There was a rush and a scamper, and away we went like the wind, leaving the fair demoielles and the mall phaetons, and the dog-carts, and pedestrians far behind in less than no time."

"After a very fast gallop of some twenty minutes we ran him to ground near Denton Hill. Inchfield Gorse was drawn again, but without success. Then we tried Linton's Gorse, and Reynard, on being found, ran towards Low Sear and back, almost parallel to Denton Cross, being eventually lost not far from Sittingdale's place, after a long and steady run."

"At Mushroom-Hill a third fox was quickly on foot, and made his way towards Meringdene; turning to the right he ran down to Blackthorn Spinney, and the hounds killed at last, after a tough race, just beyond."

"I was the first in at the death, and as no lady was present they gave the brush to me, and I have brought it for you, if you will accept it, Lady Molyneux!"

"Thanks. I shall do so with pleasure. What a glorious time you must have had."

"We did, indeed, splendid. Just enough to make one wish for more, which is the true way to take every pleasure, for then they never pall."

"Of course."

"There are some pleasures that never pall, O'Hara, no matter how much you indulge in them," observed Sir Lionel, as he raised a glass of Chamberlain to his lips, and looked across at Maggie, with a world of love shining in his dark eyes.

"Some don't, of course," agreed the artist, wincing as he saw the look, and wondering if he would ever have grown tired of kissing the exquisite lips of the woman who sat at his right hand. "Still most do, and as the worst disease of all is ennui, it is just as well to be cautious how we take our pleasures, lest they should pall, and we have nothing left to live for."

There was a ring of weariness in his voice, and Maggie, looking up as he spoke, met his eyes, and it seemed to her that a lost spirit gazed out of them, full of black despair, and hopeless longing.

She lowered hers at once, and did not look at him again during dinner.

"Won't you sing something!" suggested Lord Sittingdale, when the gentlemen joined their hostess in the drawing-room.

"I shall be very pleased to, if Lady Molyneux wishes it," responded O'Hara.

"Of course she wishes it," said Sir Lionel,

cordially. "We know how well you sing. It is quite a treat to hear you."

The Baroness's tone was particularly hearty. Terence had made the most of his golden opportunity when Maggie left the gentlemen chatting over their wine, and had been so agreeable and complimentary that his young host was more than ever taken with him; and thought him one of the nicest fellows he had ever met. Little knowing what a wolf in sheep's clothing he was, what a serpent in guise of a dove—a serpent who would plant his fangs deep in his heart, and poison his happiness, destroying the calm joy of his existence, and that of the creature nearest and dearest to him in the whole world.

"Thanks. I am glad you find it so. I will try and remember something without music."

He went over to the piano, and sang Milton Welling's stirring ballad, "Forget, forgive," throwing a great deal of expression into the "Come back, sweetheart," part, and looking over and anon at Lady Molyneux, who lay back in her chair, with her little hands tightly interlaced, listening to Henrique Clinton as he spoke of his brother, and told her all the news about Maud, and the messages he had received that morning in a letter to give to her. She listened attentively to all the young Italian said, and tried to shut her ears to the rich rolling melody of the voice, which was so painfully familiar to her, but it was quite impossible. She could not but hear, concentrate her attention as she would on the low-toned conversation of the man at her side, and when O'Hara began to sing "For ever," she stopped involuntarily and listened, for he seemed to be pouring his whole soul with extraordinary fervour into the words.

"I think of all thou art to me,
I dream of what thou canst not be;
My life is sure with thoughts of thee,
For ever and for ever!"

He sang as though he meant it, with wonderful expression and tenderness.

"Ah, leave me not! I love but thee!
Blowing or cease, which art thou be,
Oh! be as thou hast been to me,
For ever and for ever!"

"Do you like that song?" he asked, when it was finished, going over and standing beside her.

"Yes, I think it is beautiful," she answered in a low voice, without looking up at him.

"So do I. It explains a man's feelings so well. A woman may be a curse to him, and yet—and yet, he would suffer anything, sometimes rather than lose her—rather than be deprived the right of looking into her eyes, of holding her hand, of kissing her lips, of hearing her voice."

"He spoke with barely repressed passion, and Lady Molyneux murmured "Yes," scarcely knowing what to say, while young Clinton looked at the handsome flushed face, and the brilliant blue eyes, and thought to himself what queer emotional creatures these artist-fellows were, and wished he would go away, in order that he, Henrique, might continue his interesting conversation with his hostess. But O'Hara had not the least intention in the world of badging an inch.

He sat down at Maggie's side, and chatted away easily and gaily, as though to make up for his emotional outbreak, and took not the least notice of Clinton's black looks. Truth to tell, he did not quite like the friendship that seemed to exist between her ladyship and the good-looking Italian, and he determined to play the part of Marplot as far as he could, so stayed beside her, till the footman announced that Lord Sittingsdale's phaeton had come to take them back to the Manor, and he was forced to take his leave. Yet he was gratified by two things. Clinton had to go, too; and Sir Lionel gave him a most pressing invitation to come and stay at the Hall as soon as he could, and paint the portraits of his wife and child, an invitation which O'Hara eagerly accepted, for he knew it would help him to obtain his long-wished-for, long-coveted revenge, and he went away more than contented, and dreamt that night of a horse

of his own beyond the seas, groomed by the fair presence of a violet-eyed, golden-haired woman.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ISLAND OF HAPPINESS.

"WHERE are the sittings to commence for your portrait, Lady Molyneux?"

O'Hara asked the question carelessly enough, in a carefully-guarded voice, as he leant on the stone coping of the ivy-grown terrace at Maggie's side, looking away over the park and sweep of woodland at the range of mountains that shut out from view the restless, tossing ocean, and no one would have guessed the eagerness with which he waited for her answer.

It was the month of roses, and he had been located at the Hall nearly six weeks—six weeks which had been full of moments of a mad, delicious joy to him, and of bitter, despairing regret.

It was joy to him to be near Maggie. She had lost her fear of him in a great degree—his manner had been so friendly and calm, she thought he had relinquished all idea of revenge. She did not know, alas! that it had simply taken another form; and so, remembering the past, she was kind and gentle to him, so gentle that he was insane enough to fancy that in time, with opportunity, he might alienate her from her husband, teach her to love him again, and persuade her to fly with him to southern, sunny climes, leaving behind all a true woman holds dear—honour, fame, husband, child, home.

He had been painting little Jack's portrait, and generally the mother had been present, but also the nurse, which, of course, prevented him from prosecuting and carrying out his intentions, but he hoped much from the sittings she was to give him herself.

He could easily express a wish to be alone with his model; there would be nothing strange in that, as artists seldom like to be overlooked while working, and it would give him opportunities to breathe the insidious flattery into her ear, and to gradually unfold his hideous scheme for her undoing, so he listened with bated breath and suppressed eagerness for her answer.

"When you like," she answered.

"To-morrow, then."

"So soon?"

"Yes. The sooner the better, I think. The light is at its best now, and I can do a good day's work, and get it over quickly."

"There is no necessity to get it over quickly," she said, kindly, lifting her violet eyes to his; "we do not want you to hurry away from the Hall unless you wish to do so."

"I most certainly do not. I am perfectly content here—nay, more than content; I have not felt so happy for many a weary day as I have during these past few weeks."

He heaved the last to try her, threw it out as a sort of feeler, for the glance of her lovely orbs had set his pulses tingling, had made him long to take her in his arms and kiss the sweet mobile mouth as he had done in the old days, when she belonged to him, and he had the right to do it.

But the meaning of his words passed by her; she was too innocent to understand them, and it never struck her that he would dare to make love to her—Lionel Molyneux's wife—so she said, quite calmly,—

"Then, take your time over it, and do not hurry yourself."

"Thanks," he answered, with a ring of triumph in his tones, "I will do so as you kindly give me permission, and, of course, the result will be more satisfactory if much care and time are bestowed on the painting."

"Of course," agreed her ladyship, innocently falling into the trap laid for her.

"Then I am to have my first sitting to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"At what time?"

"Whenever you wish."

"At eleven?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. Then I shall expect you in my studio at eleven punctually?"

"Yes."

"I hope you won't mind coming alone! I can paint so much better when I have only my model with me; another person in the room has a disturbing effect, and distracts my attention."

"Not at all; I can quite understand your feelings. It must be very irritating to have a third person constantly in the room with you."

"It is very irritating," he replied, with emphasis.

"The only person who will be likely to come and have a peep at it occasionally is Sir Lionel."

"Oh, of course, I don't mind him!" he said, hastily.

"No; and he won't be able to disturb you very much, he is always so busy at this time of the year. He doesn't seem to think his steward manages things properly on the farms unless he keeps his eye on him, and superintends matters, and is generally out in the mornings."

"So much the better," muttered O'Hara, *settling* his pose. "Will give me greater opportunities."

"What costume do you wish me to wear?" asked Maggie, after a pause of some minutes.

"I think black velvet would be the best, unless you fancy anything else."

"No, I have no particular fancy, and should much prefer your arranging the details of my costume."

"In that case would you kindly let me see the dress you propose to wear?"

"Certainly. I will tell Breshaw to bring it down to the library, then you can give me any hints about it that you think will be necessary."

"With pleasure."

And then these two, who were once so much to each other, went to the library, and criticised the costly velvet dress, with its old point trimmings, and O'Hara suggested an alteration here and an addition there, and told her she must wear some jewels to enliven the sombreness of her toilet, and they chatted away until dinner time, and Sir Lionel was told about it, and his opinion asked, and his approval given of the costume O'Hara had chosen.

The next morning punctually at eleven Maggie entered the great picture gallery, which the artist had chosen for his studio, as the huge bay windows, reaching nearly to the ceiling, gave much splendid light for painting. He was waiting for her, looking very handsome in a velvet coat of artistic cut, with a mah-stick in his hand, a flush on his face that hid the lines and did away with the haggard look habitual to it now, and an eager light in his deep blue eyes.

An involuntary cry of admiration escaped his lips as she entered; she looked so exquisitely beautiful. The heavy dress fell in graceful folds around her slender figure, and swept out far behind, adding dignity to her appearance.

It was cut low in the front, and left uncovered the warm white neck, with its flashing collar of opals and diamonds; the dimpled snowy arms were bare to the shoulder, save for the costly jewels clasped on them; her sunbright hair was twisted into a coronet on to the top of the dusky head; there was a delicate flush on the oval cheek, a tremor about the curving lips that made her irresistibly lovely; and the man gazing at her with hungry eyes found it almost impossible to crush down the mad longing which assailed him to take her in his arms and press her close to his heart that beat so thickly, it almost seemed to suffocate him with its quick throbs.

"Is my dress right—will it do?" she asked, coming closer to him, and standing where the strong light fell full on her, showing up every graceful curve in face and figure, with startling distinctness.

"Yes; it will do," he said at last, hoarsely, turning away and bending over his palette, so that she should not see the sudden pallor on his face, or notice the trembling hands he could not still.

"I am glad of that," she announced, blithely, for she felt very merry and well-pleased.

Having her portrait painted was an entirely new amusement to her, and she was as pleased as a child over a new toy, and glad, besides, to be able to do Terence a good turn, for she knew

that the Baronet would pay him liberally for his work.

"I think it looks very well, and I hope it will come out equally well in the picture."

"I don't see why it shouldn't," he said at last, mastering the wave of passion that had swept over him and facing her. "I think it perfect, and the arrangement of your hair particularly becoming."

"Oh, thanks!"

"Will you come here and let me pose you! Ah, M. Lynx!" he added, as the Baronet came in. "Just in time to give me the benefit of your opinion. How shall I depict Lady Molyneux—standing, sitting, or reclining?"

"Well, really, my dear fellow, I don't know," responded Sir Lionel. "Which do you think would be best?"

"Sitting, I think, a little forward. Don't you?"

"Yes, perhaps so, but I want you to do it your way. I know it will be a very good way, and I don't mean to interfere at all."

"I hope you don't," thought Terence to himself; "it will be the worse for you if you do." Aloud he remarked, "Very well, then, I shall follow my own inclinations."

"Yes, do. I only came in for a moment. I am off to Inchfield Farm. One of my hunters out at grass there, I hear this morning, has strained his leg. I am going to see the extent of the damage, and if anything can be done for him."

"Yes."

"So, good-bye. Good-bye, my darling. Don't tire yourself by sitting too long," and, with a kiss, he took his departure.

O'Hara set his teeth hard, as the Baronet's lips met Maggie's. He felt that he would like to hurl himself on him and throttle the life out of him, so that he might never again touch the lips that he, O'Hara, coveted. All the wild Irish blood in him boiled, as he thought of the rights that other man possessed which should be his.

The old craving for revenge woke with redoubled vigour. He would do anything—dare anything to obtain it. Why had love come to him as a curse, a passion of pain, a madness of misery? Why had all the fever and the frost of it fallen on his head, and nothing but the great joy of possession, the calm delight of requited affection, been the portion of the other?

The golden hopes of his youth had not been realised; they had ended in a disappointment black and bitter as death. The gall had fallen to his share, the honey to Sir Lionel's. He had misused what was pleasant and good in life, or, rather, had been robbed of it. The anguish of the thought woke all the old pain and passion with bitter clamour.

But he would have revenge, he would yet win; and with that thought uppermost in his mind he worked away through the sultry, summer days, feasting his eyes on the loveliness that he told himself would one day be his, despite the bond that bound the woman he coveted to another.

Maggie did not see the glances full of passion and longing that he cast at her, or, innocent as she was, she might have taken fright, and have lost the serene feeling of happiness and security that had come to her of late. But he had posed her on a high, throne-like sort of couch, with her head turned slightly to the right and her eyes looking out over the park and woodland, so they escaped her notice; and his declaration when it did come burst on her like a thunder-clap heard on a bright, calm summer's day, and almost overwhelmed her with horror and dismay.

"Will it be finished soon now?" she asked one sultry morning after the sitting was over.

"Before very long," he replied. "Will you be glad or sorry?" he asked, a moment later, fixing his eyes intently on the rose-blush face beside him.

"Both," she answered lightly. "Othello's occupation will be gone." But you, I am sure, will be unforgottenly thankful."

"On the contrary," he rejoined, pointedly, "I shall be unforgottenly sorry."

"Will you?" she said, innocently. "Why?"

She raised her eyes to his as she spoke, but something in the burning glance she met made her lids droop, and her hands tremble.

"Because I shall not pass hours daily alone here with you."

"That will not be much loss," she said, striving to speak quietly, but wringing and twisting her hands in the folds of her heavy dress, for there was the dawn of a great fear in her heart.

"It will be an unmitigated loss to me, one that I shall be hardly able to bear."

"We must bear all things," she murmured, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"Yes, when they cannot be remedied," he answered quickly; "but when they can, why should we go on eating our hearts out with vain longings, bitter regrets?"

"I—I—don't know."

"Neither do I. My loss can be remedied. You know how passionately I did, nay, I do love you—"

"Mr. O'Hara!" She made a gesture of repulsion and indignation.

"Nay, hear me," he cried, madly. "You owe me that at least. Think of the days and nights of misery your falsehood has condemned me to—think of them and listen to me."

"I—I cannot listen to such words," and she made an effort to go, but he stood before her, barring the way, his passion-worn face darkly flushed, his eyes gleaming cruelly.

"You shall listen. Is the past, and the joys we shared together dead to you? Is my misery nothing to you? My blasted hopes, my wrecked life!"

"Let me go—let me go!" she implored.

"No, not till I have said my say, not till you have heard me, and given the answer to my prayer. I love you still. I rebel madly against the fate that has made you another man's wife. Break the bonds that hold you, and fly with me. I am your first love; you care for me, you were dazzled by his wealth. I am rich now; I will cherish you tenderly. Come with me, love."

He caught the nerveless hands that hung by her side tightly in his, and pressed them against his heart.

"Come with me, banish the clouds that surround me, make my life a long dream of happiness!"

He bent over her, and looked in her face. She did not resist, did not shrink away; she simply stood there as though turned to stone, staring before her into vacancy, with widely open eyes, full of agony, that saw nothing.

"Come," he went on softly, thinking she was yielding. "Let the memory of the old days plead for me. We were meant for each other. No power on earth can keep us apart—no power on earth can keep me away from your side. Come! Let everything be forgotten—save that we love, as never man and woman loved before."

He bent lower, throwing his arm round her, and attempting to press his lips to hers. The action seemed to break the spell which had fallen on her. With a low cry she wrenched herself from his embrace, and drew her girlish graceful figure erect to its full height, looking at him with flashing eyes.

"How dare you insult me!" she asked in low, tremulous tones, the proud sweet lips quivering with suppressed emotion. For a moment he shrank from the flash of those glorious violet eyes, then he said hoarsely,—

"Insult you! What do you mean? Is the offer of a man's love an insult?"

"The offer of yours to me is an unparalleled insult," she answered proudly. "You have made a terrible mistake. I love and adore my husband, you I despise, and shall for the future treat with the contempt you richly merit."

In an instant the white heat of rage changed the man's handsome face into something almost too diabolical to behold.

"Take care, take care!" he cried, "my heart lies for a second time at your feet. Beware how you trample on it again—beware how you make it bleed. You shall pay a terrible price for every drop you wring from it."

"Let me pass," she said, coldly; "I do not

A THIN COCOA.

EPPS'S

The choicest roasted nibs of the natural Cocoa, on being subjected to powerful hydraulic pressure, give forth their excess of oil, leaving for use a finely-flavoured powder—a product which, when prepared with boiling water, has the consistency of tea, of which it is now, with many, beneficially taking the place. Its active principle being a gentle nerve stimulant, supplies the needed energy without unduly exciting the system. Sold only in labelled tins. If unable to obtain it of your tradesman, a tin will be sent post free for 9 stamps.—JAMES EPPS and Co., Ltd., Homoeopathic Chemists, London.

COCOA ESSENCE

"No shape but this can please your dainty eye."—Shakespeare.

EXQUISITE MODELS.
PERFECT FIT.
GUARANTEED WEAR.



Y & N

DIAGONAL SEAM CORSETS.

Will not split in the seams nor lose in the fabric.

Made in White, Black, and all the fashionable colours and shades in Italian Cloth, Satin, and Gossamer.

4/11, 5/11, 6/11, 7/11

per pair and upwards.

THREE GOLD MEDALS.

Sold by the principal Drapers and Ladies' Outfitters.

£20

Hairstressess
dressed up. Mail-
order free.

TORACONISTS COMMENCING.

See Ill. Guide (2nd page), 2d. How to open a
Cigar Store, 2nd to 2500. TORACONISTS
OUTFITTING CO., 190, Abchurch Lane, London.
The largest and original house (20 years' reputa-
tion). Manager, H. WYER.



EVERY WOMAN WILL WELCOME

the news contained in our little book entitled "Health—The Sunshine of Life." It tells her how quickly and surely all nerve pains—weakness, debility, backache, loss of appetite, that tired feeling and ill-health are cured—with copies of testimonials from all sorts and conditions of women who have proved the value of the Electro-belt. This belt is guaranteed to send a mild continuous current of that life-giving, invigorating and purifying force—electricity—right through the system, restoring healthy vigor to the delicate organs of feminine structure, as no other remedy can do. Thousands have testified to this, call and read their letters or send for copies, and our little book which will be sent

FREE. Send at once and grasp this opportunity of putting your delicate organism in every part of your body in perfect health. The Consulting Physician and Electrician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, says:—"Electricity is one of the most powerful tonics we possess. No agent so quickly restores the depressed system." We say that no case above can resist the marvellous curative power in the Electropathic Belt. Every belt guaranteed. Advice free, call or write without delay. Name this paper.

THE MEDICAL BATTERY COMPANY.

489, Oxford Street, London, W.

wish to lower myself by listening to such language."

She stepped forward as she spoke, waving him aside, and the look on her face was that of a woman mortally wounded, fearfully offended that such an insult should be offered to her—to Lionel Molyneux's wife. Outraged dignity, injured pride, spoke in her look and gesture.

"You shall listen as long as I please," he replied, coolly, not moving an inch.

"How dare you stop me! I will ring for my servants and have you turned out."

"No, you will not."

"I will show you that I mean what I say."

"And I will show you that you don't."

"You can't stay here after what has passed."

"I can, and shall."

"I will not allow you to do so."

"Indeed. You won't be able to make me go!"

"I shall tell Sir Lionel."

"I think not, for he would want to know what led up to the little proposal I have just made you, and I should not be over-scrupulous about romancing a little; so I think, after hearing my version of the story, that he would consider I was not much to blame."

"That will not prevent me doing what is right," she answered, firmly. "I shall tell him everything in connection with yourself, from the first moment I had the misfortune to meet you down to the present time."

"I hardly think so."

"Why, pray!" she demanded, scornfully.

"Because if you utter one word with regard to what has passed between us to-day, or with regard to our former acquaintance, I will tell your husband the secret of Molyneux's Rest, tell him of the curse that hangs over him, of the fate in store for him."

"No—no!" she exclaimed, with a cry like a wounded animal. "No—no! anything but that!"

"Ah! I thought I could touch you, madam—bring you to heel like a whipped spaniel. You will be silent for his sake!"

"Yes! Oh, yes!"

"Not breathing a word, not giving a single hint!"

"No."

"And you will be the same outwardly to me?"

For a moment she hesitated, and then murmured "Yes" almost inaudibly.

"That is well," he rejoined, with thinly-veiled triumph, "and as the portrait is not yet finished you must continue the sittings."

"No—no!" she ejaculated, stretching out her hands.

"You must. Your not doing so would arouse Molyneux's suspicions, and that would never do."

"I can't—indeed I can't!" she objected, raising her lovely eyes, half-drowned in tears, to his. "Spare me that; I cannot be for hours alone with you again."

"Flattering, very!" he sneered. "But as I have no object now in being alone with you, you can have someone present—the nurse, or the baby, or the butler. Come, promise!"

"I promise," she said, faintly, thinking of the husband she loved so dearly, whose sanity she must try and guard, no matter at what cost to herself; and then he stood aside, and she staggered out of the gallery, feeling her way by the wall like one blind.

"Balked again!" muttered O'Hara, savagely, clenching his hands. "Nothing now remains but to wreak my vengeance on him. I have done with the woman, he must suffer; and he shall, by Heaven! He shall suffer more than I have," and he looked as though he meant to carry out his threat, as he stood there in the tawny moonlight, gnawing the ends of his tawny moustache, and staring moodily at the landscape.

Long he stood there gazing straight before him. Maggie's rejection of his suit was a great blow to him, and one which his own vanity had made unexpected.

Of late he had dreamed of a life full of fair possibilities, of a happiness just within his grasp; but the beautiful vista had narrowed with start-

ling rapidity, shutting out all that was pleasant from the future, leaving it greyer, duller, more barren, and making a worse man of him—a man utterly lost to mercy or pity—stony, hard, cold, immovable, living but for one thing—his revenge!

"What a fool I have been," he said, half-aloud, "to put my faith a second time in woman, to trust to such a rotten reed. I must find my pleasure elsewhere."

"Yes; but where was he to find that pleasure? There would be no pleasant place in the world for him. His Island of Happiness had sunk down into the ocean—down—down, far beneath the waves. He was like the foolish prince in the fairy tale, who kissed the sleeping princess, and so brought about his own ruin.

He had been foolish, and lost the little happiness he had possessed, for he knew, now that he had lost it, how dearly he prized Maggie's society and the friendship she had been willing to give him; for though in a way he hated her, with a mad, wild hatred, born of jealousy, still at the same time he loved her, and would to the last day of his life.

(To be continued.)

THIS STORY COMMENCED IN NO. 1855. BACK NUMBERS CAN STILL BE HAD.

FACTETLE

A BOY who had read of sailors heaving up anchors wanted to know if it was sea-sickness that made them do it.

A MAN asked an Irishman why he wore his stockings wrong side outward. "Because," said he, "there's a hole on the other side."

STARBOARD: "Hutrah! I've found a sultana in this cake!" ATTIC: "If you tell the landlady perhaps she will let you keep it for your honesty."

SEA-SIDE VISITOR: "What a magnificent villa! It must have cost a fortune." DRIVER: "That's Smith's cottage." VISITOR: "Ah, indeed! Smith the soap man, or Smith the pill man?"

"You said Mrs. Wabash got her furniture on the instalment plan, didn't you?" Mrs. Dearborn: "Yes; she's had four husbands, and got a little with each one."

"Do you mean to tell me," said the unfortunate litigant, "that the whole property in dispute has been wasted in costs?" "I said it had been absorbed, my friend—not wasted," replied the lawyer, who had got most of it.



4/- SEWING MACHINE 4/-

Patented No. 45197.

"As supplied to Her Imperial Majesty the Empress Alexandra of Russia." THIS Machine does work which will bear comparison with that of other machines costing higher prices. Entirely made of metal, with steel and plated fittings. It works at great speed. It has no complication like other machines, therefore does not require to be learnt. No winding of bobbins. No trouble. No teaching. No experience; and is everywhere superseding the old-fashioned troublesome machines. It works fine or coarse materials equally as well. Sent Carriage Paid for 4s. 6d.; two for 8s. 6d. Extra Needles, 6d. and 1s. per packet. Write for Free Opinions and Testimonials, or call and see the Machines at work. Address—

SEWING MACHINE CO.,

34 DEPT 31 BROOKE STREET, HOLBORN, LONDON, E.C.

COCKROACHES AND BEETLES.

Blown into holes and crevices where these pests exist, forces them out to positively die in the open.

VERMITE

HARMLESS TO EVERYTHING BUT INSECTS

KILLS NEVER FAILS?

ALL INSECTS

BEETLES, MOTHS, BUGS, FLEAS, &c.

BELLOW'S PATENT 3-0-1

JOHN GALABRESE & CO., LTD.

26, BILLITER BUILDINGS, BILLITER STREET, LONDON.

NOW used with unparalleled success by H.M.'s Admiralty, Hotels, Clubs, Restaurants, Bakeries, Breweries, and ALL PASSENGER STEAMSHIP LINES.

SOCIETY.

In November next the Duke and Duchess of York will be the guests of the Earl of Durham at Lambton Castle.

WHEN Queen Victoria entertains, the plate used is selected from the store kept in strong-rooms at Windsor Castle, which is valued at £1 500 000.

QUEEN VICTORIA has never visited Monte Carlo, and has never received the reigning Prince and Princess. To Her Majesty it seems a perfect scandal that a ruler should derive revenues from a place which enmeshes and ruins thousands.

The Prince of Wales will spend a month in Scotland when he returns from the Continent at the beginning of September. His Royal Highness is to be the guest of the Queen at Balmoral for a week or ten days, and he will pass the remainder of his time in the north at Mar Lodge with the Duke and Duchess of Fife. The annual big deer-drives in Mar Forest will take place during the Prince's visit.

THE Duke and Duchess of York will not return to Sandringham until the beginning of October. During their stay in Scotland they are to be the guests of the Queen at Balmoral and of the Duke and Duchess of Fife at Mar Lodge; while on their way south, about the end of September, they will be the guests of the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch at Drumlanrig Castle, Dumfriesshire, for a few days.

THUS are three rings which the Queen never, by any chance, removes from her hand. One is the little enamel ring, set with a single diamond, given to her when quite a child by Prince Albert; another is her betrothal-ring, a beautiful snake of emeralds; and the third is a plain narrow band—her wedding-ring.

THE Duchess of Albany is at Dresden, where a house has been taken for her and where she will live with her children. In Dresden there is a very excellent school for boys, at which many princes have been educated, and here it is that the Duke of Albany is to study for the next few years until he is old enough to go to a university, after which he will enter a German regiment. His Royal Highness is an excellent German scholar, so that he will find no great difficulties in his new mode of life.

At Windsor Castle meals are served in a regular series. The servants' hall dinner comes in for the first attention, then follows the stewards' room dinner—a dignified and refined repast. Next in regular succession, comes the household, the ladies-in-waiting, the nursery, and Her Majesty's luncheon. Each set of dishes has its exact place on the serving-table, which is a dream of magic. The table is of hollow steel, with hollow legs. The rim is of brass. Steam keeps the table very hot, and it is covered with an immaculate cloth. The dishes rest here until each server arrives to take the courses. The great larder at Windsor is a wonderful sight. The lower larder is a shaft for ice, and in connection with this is a salting-chamber, all cut in the solid chalk cliff.

THE Hereditary Prince of Saxe-Weimar, who has recently been betrothed to the Duchess Sophia of Oldenburg, who is a niece of the Duchess of Connaught, is one of the best Royal matches in Europe. The Prince is at present next heir (through his grandmother, the late Grand Duchess Sophia) to the throne of the Netherlands; but, even if this succession comes to nothing, he will inherit the throne of Saxe-Weimar from his grandfather, the Grand Duke Charles, together with very large and rich family estates and a fortune of sixty millions of marks. The Hereditary Prince was born in June, 1876, and he is nearly three years older than his future wife. The Grand Duchess Sophia left a huge fortune, sixty millions of marks going to her husband, the Grand Duke Charles, for his life, and then to his heir, while twenty millions were divided between her two daughters, and ten millions and valuable estates in Silesia went to her grandson, Prince Bernard, younger brother of the Hereditary Prince.

STATISTICS.

THE ARE 1,000 novels published in London every year—that is, about three a day.

THE shores of the British Islands, Holland, and France maintain the greatest number of lighthouses in proportion to mileage.

THE share of land falling to each inhabitant of the globe, in the event of a partition, might be set down at twenty-three and a half acres.

THE heart of a vegetarian beats on an average of fifty-eight to the minute; that of the meat-eater seventy-five. This represents a difference of 20,000 beats in twenty-four hours.

GEMS.

THE true culture of personal beauty is not external; it is heart work.

THE imaginative faculty of the soul must be fed with objects immense and eternal.

ECONOMY is half the battle of life. As a rule it is not so hard to earn money as to spend it well.

IN the man whose childhood has known carelessness and kindness there is always a fibre of memory that can be touched to gentle issues.

TO a certain extent the will can regulate the surroundings, and so indirectly influence the unconscious life. The latter in its turn is continually forming habits and supplying motives, and thus building up the more prominent but not the more essential sphere of voluntary and conscious power.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LOBSTER SANDWICHES.—The tinned kind may be used. Pound a half-pound of lobster in a mortar with the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs, two ounces butter, six pickled capers, a little cayenne pepper and salt to taste; a squeeze of lemon juice is an improvement, but, if not to hand, use the caper vinegar instead. Make into flat sandwiches between Hovis or any other brown bread-and-butter.

CHEESE TOAST.—Put half an ounce of butter into a small enamelled saucepan; when it is melted, add four ounces of good cooking cheese, grated, a dash of cayenne and salt, a very little made mustard, and half a teaspoonful of Worcester sauce. Stir the cheese over a quick fire until it is melted, and then pour it on to small rounds of fried bread; scatter some browned crumbs over the top, and serve at once.

TARTARE SAUCE.—Put the yolks of two raw eggs into a basin with half a teaspoonful of salt, a little pepper, and half a teaspoonful each of French and English made mustard. Then add about half a pint of salad-oil, drop by drop, stirring the sauce one way all the time. When it is very stiff, add one teaspoonful each of tarragon, chibbi, and malt vinegar, and eight or ten drops of lemon-juice. Stir in half a teaspoonful of mixed chopped capers and gherkins, and one tablespoonful of chopped tarragon, chervil and parsley. This sauce should be made very stiff.

CHICKEN ROLLS.—Half-pound cooked chicken, two ounces cooked ham, two ounces butter, one teaspoonful lemon-juice, two tablespoonfuls white stock, one dozen small rolls, pepper, salt and nutmeg. The rolls can be bought from the baker; cut them in half, and scoop out most of the soft bread in the middle. For the filling, mince the chicken and ham very finely, and pound in a mortar—if you have one—along with the butter and seasoning, the stock being added to moisten the paste. Fill the rolls with this mixture, join them together, and brush them over with glaze, and put in a cool place to dry.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Sultan of Turkey spends more for his table than any other human being of modern or ancient times—£1,000 daily.

THE bones of all flying birds are hollow and filled with air, thus combining the greatest strength with the greatest possible lightness.

MANY of the houses in Manila have the windows constructed of translucent oyster shells instead of glass. These temper the light and heat, and are grateful to the human eye.

THE railway gauges in New South Wales and Victoria are different. All travellers by rail between these colonies are obliged to change carriages at a station on the border.

SWEDEN is building a new navy. The sixth ship of the new type, the *Njord*, is receiving its guns and final equipment. It is a coast-defence vessel of 3,500 tons.

THE English are building a dam across the Nile at Assuan, which is of granite, 36 to 40 feet thick, 78 feet high at some points, and over a mile long. It will cover the cataracts at that point, and vessels will be passed up and down by means of locks.

THE Princess of Wales has gone abroad with Princess Victoria and Princess Charles of Denmark, and will probably be away until the end of October, in Germany, Austria, and Denmark. Her Royal Highness will spend a few days at Wiesbaden when on her way to the Duke of Cumberland's seat near Gmunden.

GREEK divers have discovered treasure in a Russian flagship sunk in Greek waters in 1779. Gold coins to the value of £11,000 have already been recovered, and the divers report great stores of silver and jewels, which the storms of a century have washed out from the hulk of the old wreck.

TUNNELS under the Thames are multiplying rapidly. Hardly has the Blackwall Tunnel been open when another at Rotherhithe is projected. It is to be thirty feet in diameter—three feet more than the Blackwall Tunnel. It is to be a mile and a quarter long. The total work will cost about £1,400,000; but nearly £20,000 of this will go for approaches.

RUNAWAY accidents seldom occur in Russia. The means used in preventing them is very simple. In Russia, a horse that is addicted to the habit of running away has a thin cord, with a running noose, around his neck, and the end is tied to the dashboard. When a horse bolts, he always takes the bit in his teeth, and the skill of the driver is useless; but the moment the pressure comes on the windpipe the horse knows he has met his master.

THE most extraordinary forest in the world occupies a tableland some six miles in width, between three hundred and four hundred feet above the sea, near the West coast of Africa. The peculiarity of the trees of this forest is that, though their trunks are much as four feet in diameter, they attain the height of only one foot. No tree bears more than two leaves, and these attain a length of six and a breadth of two feet. The flowers make gorgeous crimson clusters.

THE people who live in the Barotse country develop the muscles of their arms, chests, and backs to an abnormal degree, but they seem to be able to use their strength for nothing but canoeing. The Barotse are great fishermen, using all manner of nets, traps, and assegais for catching their fish. They, however, seem to prefer fish other than fresh. Sometimes they kipper their catch, and occasionally they are fit for food and unstinted, but more often remind one of "Cape snook." But their delight seems to be fish they find floating in the water, caught, killed, and half-eaten by a fish-eagle. These fish have been killed probably three or four days, and are usually putrid when found. In this condition the Barotse eat them with evident satisfaction. The great number of lepers found on the river can probably be traced to this filthy practice.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ALF.—Yes, certainly it would be perjury.
P. D.—The marriage is valid and binding.
A. K.—You had much better see a solicitor.
STROMGILL.—The Channel Islands belong to Great Britain.
BRACKEL.—You had better make a will and dispose of your goods as you think best.
UNRA.—We think there is little likelihood of any action whatever being taken.
INPATR.—A youth under twenty-one is not competent to give a valid receipt for a legacy.
SUN HOLL.—It is quite beyond our power to undertake private correspondence with our readers.
LEOF.—You have done all that courtesy requires, and need not invite further insult by attempting to do more.

A PRIVATE MOTHER.—Write to the commanding officer of the regiment your son is in stating your circumstances.

ELLA.—Tablesports at the corners of the table are not necessary. Put any that are required on the right-hand side of each dish as it is used.

ELMOR.—The betrothal finger is the same as the wedding ring. A lady may, however, wear any ring except the wedding ring without anything being meant except her love of ornament.

CAPTAIN.—There is a missing friend's office to Melbourne, which undertakes searches for people in the colony upon payment of fees. It does not seem to us that there should be much difficulty in discovering your relatives.

QUART.—A will may be drawn up by anyone, and may be written on one of the printed forms. It does not need a solicitor, but if there is anything complicated in the disposal of the property it is safer to employ a solicitor.

GEORGE.—It is mainly owing to the increased rarity of the atmosphere at high degrees of elevation. By looking into any work on natural philosophy, and in many works on geography, you will find a full explanation of the whole matter.

C. D.—Sit down before the bird, and repeat over and over again, a little bit at a time, what you wish it to learn, never failing to reward it with a tit-bit, when at length it makes an attempt to imitate you; that is the only way you can get it to talk.

FRANK.—What kind of a ring should be given as an engagement ring is optional with the giver. As a rule, it is a diamond. It is worn on the third finger of the left hand. It would be courteous to consult the young lady as to her wishes.

ALFA.—If the soap is well rinsed out after each time of using you will be little troubled by it. When it accumulates repeated washings in hot water in which powdered borax has been dissolved, and changing the rinsing water once or twice if necessary, will get rid of it.

F. C.—An almost certain cure for sore feet is to wash them at night in hot water containing a good dash of vinegar; in a very bad case some bran may be taken, hot water poured on until the material is thoroughly wetted, when the feet are to be thrust in, and kept there until the bran becomes cold.

LOUELLA.—Coolie is a name given to an Asiatic labourer not belonging to the skilled or artisan class. Of late the word is almost exclusively applied to those natives of India and China who leave their native country under contracts of service to work as field hands or labourers in foreign plantations and elsewhere.

R. G. B.—Half-pound arrowroot, quarter pound fine white sugar, quarter pound of butter, three whites of eggs, essence of vanilla. Beat the butter and sugar till quite white, then add the arrowroot gradually, beating all the time. Whisk the whites to snow, and stir them in, then the flavouring, and beat the whole thoroughly. Bake in a moderate oven.

UNHAPPY BRIDE.—A husband is not bound to pay for a dress his wife bought before marriage, nor is he liable for any other debts she incurred while still a single woman; the creditor can sue her if he thinks there is anything to be made by it; it is no part of a husband's duty to provide clothes for the woman he is about to marry.

LOUELLA.—Excellent salad dressing may be made without oil in the following proportions: Take the yolks of two hard-boiled eggs and make them into a smooth paste in a bowl which has been rubbed with shallot. Add about half a teaspoonful of mustard, some cayenne, black pepper, and salt to taste; then by degrees, stir in four or five tablespoonfuls of cream. Lastly, mix in tarragon vinegar according to taste, and pour over the wiped lettuce leaves.

WORKING FATHER.—Never punish a child when he confesses that he has done wrong. To punish under these circumstances is really to encourage him to tell lies; and many a child has got into the habit of telling untruths simply because he knew he would be punished if he confessed. Let him see, and try and make him understand, how it grieves you, but train him to look on you as a friend to whom he can tell all his childish misdeeds without fear of punishment to follow.

N. L.—There is no "usual fee" in the case; parties may bargain about cost before the work is undertaken, if they like; it must be in proportion to the simplicity or complexity of the instructions to be carried out; sixpenny stamp suffices if articles contain no claims requiring registration; ten shilling stamp needed if there is such a claim.

SWISS TOOTH.—Blanch, chop, and dry in the oven half a pound of almonds, do not brown them. Put a pound of powdered sugar and a tablespoonful of lemon-juice into a stew-pan, stir till dissolved; when slightly coloured, throw in the almonds, mix them quickly, and avoid much stirring for fear of graining; turn out on an oiled slab, spreading the nougat out evenly with a cut lemon; mark in squares while warm, and break into pieces when cold.

C. A.—A "chartered accountant" is one who enters first of all as apprentice to a chartered accountant, and during four years in his office engages in studies with the view of passing three very stiff examinations, involving among other things a fair knowledge of commercial law; the question any man entering upon the course should answer at the outset is, what is he going to do with the qualification when he succeeds in obtaining it?

MISERY M.—Your troubles are among the most ordinary kind which arise to better lovers, and will disappear as the course of true love runs on, without your making any efforts whatever to overcome them. But the chances are that much more serious difficulties will beset your path; so you had better use the trifling annoyances of the present as a means of discipline, and of preparation for the more grievous ones that may come in the future.

M. H.—Supposing it is made sufficiently firm, all that is required is to plunge the mould for a second or two, as the case may be, into hot water, being careful not to let any water get over the sides into the mould, and not to leave the latter too long in the water. A thick mould may need one-and-a-half or two seconds, a thin one possibly less than a second; then lay the dish if it is to be served in on the top of the mould and reverse them; a tap or two will turn it out intact.

THE WHITE ROSE.

I said to the rose: "Oh, rose, sweet rose!
 Will you lie on my heart to-night,
 Will you nestle there, with your perfume rare,
 And your petals pure and white?"

I said to the rose: "Oh, rose, sweet rose!
 Will you thrill to my every sigh,
 Tho' your life exhale in the morning pale,
 And you wither and fade and die?"

I said to the rose: "Oh, rose, sweet rose!
 Will you thro' with my every breath;
 Will you give me the bliss of a passionate kiss,
 Albeit the end is death!"

The white rose lifted her stately head
 And answered me fair and true;
 "I am happy and blest to lie on your breast
 For the woman who gave me to you!"

C. R.—Well-formed round eggs should be chosen, and eleven to thirteen the number, according to the size of the fowl. They should be marked with a pencil, so that any fresh ones laid may be removed when the hen leaves her nest. Brahmas and Dorkings are both good sitters. The hens should not be interfered with while sitting, but care should be taken that there are food and clean water in the run for them when they leave the nest. The time of incubation is twenty-one days.

MAUR.—There is no doubt that your nails may be improved with a little regular attention, but in some cases rough skin growing over the nails is constitutional and difficult to cure. We would advise your using a little borax in the warm water in which you wash your hands. After washing, push back the skin that grows round the nails with the towel. Each night rub with this preparation: Dissolve a grain of alum in the white of an egg. Cut the nails regularly with scissors in a pointed shape.

KATE.—It is not possible for us to decide positively just how a young lady may find out whether a certain gentleman in whom she is interested really loves her, or how she may gain his affection. In the first place, she should be very careful not to annoy or disgust him by any display of her own preference for him. She should be careful that all advances are from him, and not from herself, as by the law of nature women must be wooed, and are not in any case to be the wooers.

GERTRAUD.—Take six hard-boiled eggs. Hull them and slice a piece off each end to make them stand well. Out in half and remove their yolks, rub them to a paste with two tablespoonfuls of melted butter or olive oil. Season to taste with finely chopped green onion, minced parsley, mustard, lemon, a little chopped anchovy pickle and half the quantity of grated ham, tongue or minced chicken, and a palatable seasoning of salt and pepper. Now fill the empty whites with this mixture. Next take six small red tomatoes, empty out the seeds and fill them with the remaining egg mixture. Sprinkle battered crumbs over the whole and bake until the crumbs are a delicate brown. Arrange on a hot platter with white sauce poured around them, and garnish with watercress or parsley.

A BOOK FOR LADIES.

The knowledge contained in this book is of PRICE LESS VALUE TO EVERY MARRIED LADY, and has been the means of brightening the lives of thousands. It contains a large amount of valuable information. All will profit by reading it, as the knowledge gained is priceless, and cannot but do good. Sent in sealed envelope for two stamps.

A lady writes us: "I have read your book. It is simply invaluable, and gave me the information I have sought after for years."

B. VIMULE, Dalston Lane, London, N.E.

How to Play the Piano.

Unique Tutor by **PROF. MUNRO.**

This marvellous tutor (self-instructor) is comprehensive, full music sheet, and as simple as A B C. It enables anyone, with or without previous knowledge of music, to learn in less than one week to play the piano or Organ beautifully, accompany songs in all keys, improvise, and play dance music. Most strongly recommended to all music lovers by the *Weekly Times* and other papers. Absolutely invaluable as time saver and pleasure-giver. You can now become immediately your own accompanist, etc. Everyone is charmed with it. Post free, 3s. 6d.

VOICE PRODUCTION AND SINGING.

New Treatise based on the true Italian method, showing how to breathe, produce, and preserve the voice; also how to phrase and sing with ease, good taste and effect. Very highly recommended by eminent authorities. Invaluable to all Singers, Clergymen and Public Speakers. Post free, 1s.

THE TEMPLE PUBLISHING CO.,
 14a, Bell Yard, London, W.C.

KEARSLEY'S 50 YEARS' REPUTATION WIDOW WELCH'S FEMALE PILLS.

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Aneurism, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of Imitations. The only genuine are in *White Paper Wrappers*. Boxes, 1s. 1/6 and 2s. 6d., of all Chemists. 2s. 6d. box contains three times the pills. Send post-free on receipt of 1s or 1s 6d. stamps, by the makers, G. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster. Sold in the Colonies.

TRY IT ON



Oh a small quantity on a Penny & leave it over night. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with Verdigris.

"MATCHLESS" will not turn metal green and is therefore free from acid.

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH

And take no other.
 Paton, Cairns & Co., Liverpool.

TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL & STEEL PILLS FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS, and relieve the distressing symptoms so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1/3 & 2/6 (contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists. Sent anywhere on receipt of 1s or 1s 6d. stamps, by E. T. TOWLE & Co., Manufacturers, Dryden St., Nottingham. Beware of Imitations, quackeries and swindlers.

THE LONDON READER can be sent to any part of the world, post-free Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence. The yearly subscription for the Monthly Part, including Christmas Part, is Eight Shillings and Eightpence, post-free.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS and VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of any Bookseller.

NOTICE.—Part 400 is Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LXXII., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

THE INDEX to Vol. LXXII. is now Ready; Price One Penny, post-free, Three-halfpence.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 24, Catherine Street, Strand, W.C.

We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

IN A TIGHT SQUEEZE.

WHEN the coal gives out, sometimes the fires under steamships' boilers are kept going by burning the woodwork of the vessel. In a tight squeeze human ingenuity finds out many a helpful expedient. Necessity is often the mother of invention.

People lost in forests have subsisted on nuts and berries until rescued. Sailors in open boats have mitigated the agony of thirst by chewing bits of leather. Nature tries to be as liberal as she can, and almost anything can be made useful in a sharp emergency.

But that is all you can say. Even Greenlanders, who drink animal oil and eat polar bears (unless the bears first eat them) do better on civilized food, when an Arctic expedition manages to spare them some. You may consult Nansen, Peary, etc., on this head.

We infer that no human being can do well on slops—such as milk, broth, soup, soda-water, etc. The walls of a house are best made of brick or stone, and the people who live in the house must be built of solid materials as well.

Alackaday! however. Here we frequently meet up with a difficulty. Whilst bricks, stuck together with mortar, may be put anywhere, solid victuals cannot be used in a human body whenever you like. They slip into their places beautifully in the case of Mr. Jones, for instance, while his neighbour Smith regards them with an aversion that amounts to horror; *needing* them at the same time as a house needs a rock foundation.

The sorriest item in Mrs. Henworth's letter, it seems to me, is where she says, "For weeks and weeks together I took no solid food at all; I lived on soda-water, milk, broth, soup, and such things." After telling us *that* it is hardly necessary for her to add that she became too weak and feeble to go about. One may keep out of the grave on a diet of that sort, but he doesn't work and sing on it.

This lady's story is short and plain, and may, perhaps, be instructive to a lot of us who are in like case. "In the autumn of 1896," she goes on to say, "I began to feel miserable and ailing. The energy and life seemed gone from me—nor could I tell what the matter was. My

appetite forsook me, and after eating what little I did take, I had much pain at the stomach and chest.

"For weeks and weeks together I took no solid food; I lived on soda-water, milk, broth, soup, and such things. For several weeks I was confined to my bed.

"A doctor attended me, but I felt none the better for what he did, although, in so saying, I do not mean to cast any reflection upon him or on his profession. It stands to reason that no doctor can cure a disease unless he has the medicine that is suited to it.

"While I was in this condition, with no hope of relief, I happened one day to get to talking with Mrs. Wright, a good neighbour of mine. I told her how I felt and what had been done for me without any benefit. At this time I was so bad I could get only a trifle of sleep at night; and heavy sweats broke out over me, rapidly taking away the small remnant of strength I had left. It looked as if I were going into a decline; and to that, as everyone knows, there is apt to be but one end.

"Hearing all this, and seeing how disheartened and low-spirited I was, Mrs. Wright said she believed she knew a medicine that would help me if it did not cure me. She said she referred to Mother Seigel's Syrup, which had cured her when she was well-nigh as bad as I was.

"On this I got a bottle and began with it immediately. In a few days I felt relieved and allowed myself to hope I would get well. Using the syrup faithfully, as directed, I was soon convinced that it would cure me. I commenced to eat stronger food and it gave me no trouble. Gradually I came to be able to eat *good, solid meals*—taking for a time a dose of the Syrup right away after eating—until I was in perfect health, and as active and vigorous as ever.

"From that time on I had no return of the ailment. I can eat anything I want, and it does me good. I believe no one will ever have indigestion if he only takes an occasional dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup."—(Signed) (Mrs.) SAMUEL HENWORTH, 123, Elmore Green Road, Bloxwich, near Walsall, South Staffs, April 26, 1898.

"No Better Food."—Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

"Cocoa, Sah!"



FRY'S Pure **COCOA**
Concentrated

275 Gold Medals and Diplomas.

N.B.—Ask SPECIALLY FOR "FRY'S PURE CONCENTRATED."



F. C. REIN & SON

(GOLD MEDALLISTS),

108, STRAND,

The Paradise for the Deaf.

F. C. REIN & SON, Patentees, Sole Inventors, and Makers of the NEW ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS, awarded Prize Medals in 1851, 1855, 1862, 1867, 1873, 1878, 1886, 1892, and 1894; Inventors, Makers, and Patentees of the ANTI-ACOUSTIC PROTECTOR, &c.

ACOUSTIC HATS & BONNETS,

For Ladies or Gentlemen, in all styles or to order.

The greatest variety of ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS suitable for every degree of Deafness, for Church and general conversation—some to wear, some to hold, some to fit in the cavity of the ear, of flesh colour, hardly observable.

ACOUSTIC CONVERSATIONAL TUBES,

TO ANY AND FOR THE MOST EXTREME DEGREE OF DEAFNESS.

EVERY KIND OF ACOUSTIC TRUMPET AND ACOUSTICAL CONTRIVANCE.

Amongst our numerous and distinguished clientele may be mentioned H.R.H. the late DUCHESS OF KENT and several members of the Reigning Royal Families.

WRITE FOR ILLUSTRATED PRICE LIST AND FULL PARTICULARS.

F. C. REIN & SON, 108, STRAND, nearly opposite Exeter Hall, LONDON.

SULPHOLINE

Bottles

Sold

Everywhere.

The Cure for Skin Diseases, Eruptions, Blotches, Eczema, Acne, Disfigurements. Makes the Skin Clear, Smooth Supple, Healthy.

LOTION

PEPPER'S

2s. 6d.

SOLD EVERYWHERE.

QUININE AND IRON

TONIC

GREAT BODILY STRENGTH!
GREAT NERVE STRENGTH!
GREAT MENTAL STRENGTH!
GREAT DIGESTIVE STRENGTH!

Promotes Appetite, Cures Dyspepsia, Hysteria, Nervous Complaints, &c.

ZEBRA CRATE POLISH.

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

PART 463. VOL. LXXIII.—NOVEMBER, 1899.

CONTENTS.

NOVELETTES.

	PAGE
STAUNCH AND TRUE	529, 559
A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE—(Concluded)	505
FOR HER OWN SAKE	582

SERIAL STORIES.

HIDDEN FROM ALL EYES	513, 538, 570
OPALS AND DIAMONDS	521, 545
BROWN EYES AND BLUE	517, 541, 565, 589
WILFUL, BUT LOVING	553, 593
YOUNG AND SO FAIR	577

SHORT STORIES.

	PAGE
ONLY AN ORPHAN WAIF	511
ONLY AN OLD HAT	507
A DIAMOND PIN	544
DR. DESHAM'S WIFE	557
IN THE WAY	569
A SOUTH AMERICAN ADVENTURE	581

VARIETIES.

POETRY	527, 551, 575, 599
FACTUM	525, 549, 573, 597
SOCIETY	526, 550, 574, 598
STATISTICS	526, 550, 574, 598
GEMS	526, 550, 574, 598
HOUSEHOLD TREASURES	526, 550, 574, 598
MISCELLANEOUS	526, 550, 574, 598
NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS	527, 551, 575, 599

PRICE SIXPENCE.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE OFFICE, 26, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

FOR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE. BEAUTIFUL HAIR.

IMPERIAL HAIR DYES & C

ONE LIQUID.

- No. 1...Black
No. 2...Dark Brown
No. 3...Light Brown
No. 4 { Golden Brown
 or Auburn
No. 5...Pure Golden
No. 6 Imperial
 Hair Grower



Harmless, Perfect,
Permanent & Odourless.

A Medical Certificate
with each bottle.

2/6, 3/6, 5/- & 10/6 (PRIVATELY PACKED).

J. BRODIE, 41 MUSEUM STREET, LONDON
Established 1868. Once Tried, Always Used.

Quickly correct all irregularities, remove all obstructions, and relieve the distressing symptoms so prevalent with the sex.

Boxes 1s. 1½d. & 2s. 9d. (the latter contains three times the quantity of all Chemists. Sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps by K.T. TOWLE & Co., Manufacturers, Dryden Street, Nottingham.)

Beware of imitations injurious & worthless!

FOR VACANT POSITIONS on this COVER

Apply—
ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER,
26, Catherine Street, Strand, London W.C.

AN OPTICAL ILLUSION!



SEE ME TAKE A

WHELPTON'S PILL.

Keep your eye on the pill, draw the picture gently towards you in a line with your face until the pill disappears in the monk's mouth.

THE BEST FAMILY MEDICINE.
THE BEST LIVER PILL.
THE BEST CURE FOR INDIGESTION.
BEST PREVENTIVE OF SEA SICKNESS.

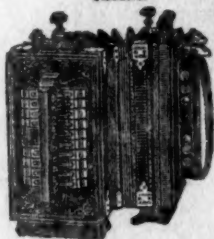
7½d., 1/1½, and 2/9, of all Chemists.

Free by Post in the United Kingdom for 8, 14, or 33 Stamps.

G. WHELPTON & SON,
3, CRANE COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

CHARMING MUSIC FOR WINTER EVENINGS.

PATENT.



CAMPBELL'S GOLD MEDAL MELODEONS

With Organ and Celestial Tone, and Charming
Bell Accompaniments.

NO HOME SHOULD BE WITHOUT ONE.

The Solemn Psalm, the Soul-stirring Hymn, the Cheerful Song, and the Merry Dance, can all be played on these Charming Instruments.

NO KNOWLEDGE OF MUSIC REQUIRED.

ENORMOUS DEMANDS. Selling in Thousands.

200,000 Testimonials.

Special Offer to the readers of the LONDON READER.

Campbell's "Gem" Melodeon . . .	Price only 6/9
Campbell's "Miniature" Melodeon . . .	10/9
Campbell's "Paragon" Melodeon . . .	14/-
Campbell's "Favourite" Melodeon . . .	16/6

Cut out this and send P.O.O. for the amount. Either sent carriage paid in Great Britain and Ireland. Money returned if not approved. ORDER at once.

All lovers of music should at once send for our New Illustrated Privilege Price List for 1899, now ready. 160,000 of these valuable lists sent out yearly. Send penny stamp to

CAMPBELL & CO., Musical Instrument Makers, 116, Trongate, Glasgow.

The Largest Stock of Musical Instruments in the Kingdom.

Established 50 years. N.B.—Beware of worthless imitations.



"MATCHLESS"

WARNING TO LADIES.
BEWARE of POLISHES containing injurious ACIDS, which EULM your metals and SPOIL your HANDS.

TEST.
TRY IT ON A PENNY.—Dab a small quantity of Polish on a penny and leave it overnight. If it contains ACID, it will turn quite green by the following morning, BUT MATCHLESS WON'T!

METAL POLISH.

PATON, CALVERT & CO. MANUFACTURERS, LIVERPOOL.

KEATING'S LOZENGES

THERE IS NO BETTER REMEDY IN THE WHOLE WORLD FOR ALL COUGH AND THROAT TROUBLES THAN KEATING'S LOZENGES. ONE GIVES RELIEF. THEY WILL CURE, AND THEY WILL NOT INJURE YOUR HEALTH. THEY CONTAIN ONLY THE PUREST DRUGS.

Sold everywhere in 1/1½ Tins.